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Thursday 29 September 2016

Jeudi 29 septembre 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 29 September 2016 / Jeudi 29 septembre 2016

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act, 2016, Bill 13, Mr. Thibeault / Loi de 2016 sur la remise de l'Ontario pour les consommateurs d'électricité, projet de loi 13, M. Thibeault

Second reading vote deferred..... 443

Election Finances Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016, Bill 2, Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2016 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le financement électoral, projet de loi 2, M. Naqvi

Mr. Victor Fedeli..... 443

Mme France Gélinas..... 446

Hon. Chris Ballard..... 446

Mr. Todd Smith..... 446

Ms. Peggy Sattler..... 447

Mr. Victor Fedeli..... 447

Mr. Wayne Gates..... 447

Hon. Reza Moridi..... 450

Mrs. Gila Martow..... 450

Miss Monique Taylor..... 451

Ms. Sophie Kiwala..... 451

Mr. Wayne Gates..... 451

Mr. Arthur Potts..... 451

Hon. Liz Sandals..... 452

Second reading debate deemed adjourned..... 453

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Lorne Coe..... 453

Mr. Norm Miller..... 453

Mr. Taras Natyshak..... 453

Mrs. Cristina Martins..... 453

Mr. Bill Walker..... 453

Mr. Paul Miller..... 453

Mr. Arthur Potts..... 453

Hon. Glen R. Murray..... 453

Mr. Yvan Baker..... 453

Hon. Mitzie Hunter..... 453

Mr. Jim McDonell..... 453

Wearing of carnations

Mme France Gélinas..... 454

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Energy policies

Mr. Patrick Brown..... 454

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne..... 454

Energy policies

Mr. Patrick Brown..... 455

Hon. Glenn Thibeault..... 455

Hon. Glen R. Murray..... 456

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Jagmeet Singh..... 456

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne..... 456

Hon. Glenn Thibeault..... 456

Hon. Charles Sousa..... 457

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Jagmeet Singh..... 457

Hon. Glenn Thibeault..... 457

Tabling of public accounts

Mr. Steve Clark..... 458

Hon. Liz Sandals..... 458

Hydro rates

Mr. John Vanthof..... 458

Hon. Glenn Thibeault..... 458

Curriculum

Ms. Sophie Kiwala..... 459

Hon. Mitzie Hunter..... 459

Fiscal accountability

Mr. Victor Fedeli..... 459

Hon. Charles Sousa..... 459

Ontario Energy Board

Mr. Peter Tabuns..... 460

Hon. Glenn Thibeault..... 460

Infrastructure program funding

Mr. Lou Rinaldi..... 460

Hon. Bob Chiarelli..... 461

Ontario Retirement Pension Plan

Mrs. Julia Munro..... 461

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne..... 461

Hon. Charles Sousa..... 461

Social assistance

Mr. Paul Miller..... 462

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne..... 462

Hon. Chris Ballard..... 462

Government services

Ms. Soo Wong..... 462

Hon. Liz Sandals..... 463

Physiotherapy services

Mr. Lorne Coe..... 463

Hon. Dipika Damerla..... 463

Hospital funding

Ms. Peggy Sattler..... 464

Hon. Dipika Damerla..... 464

Visitor	
Ms. Soo Wong.....	464

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act, 2016, Bill 13, Mr. Thibeault / Loi de 2016 sur la remise de l'Ontario pour les consommateurs d'électricité, projet de loi 13, M. Thibeault	
Second reading agreed to	464

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	464
------------------------	-----

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Hospice care	
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	465
Mason Macri	
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	465
Multiple sclerosis	
Mr. Mike Colle.....	465
Highway improvement	
Mr. Ted Arnott.....	465
Abe Oudshoorn	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	466
Antonio Sousa	
Mrs. Cristina Martins	466
Rosh Hashanah	
Mrs. Gila Martow.....	466
Minimum wage	
Mr. Paul Miller.....	467
Silver Creek Public School	
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	467

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

All Families Are Equal Act (Parentage and Related Registrations Statute Law Amendment), 2016, Bill 28, Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2016 sur l'égalité de toutes les familles (modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne la filiation et les enregistrements connexes), projet de loi 28, M. Naqvi	
First reading agreed to.....	468
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	468
Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Helmet Exemption for Sikh Motorcyclists), 2016, Bill 29, Mr. Singh / Loi de 2016 modifiant le Code de la route (exemption de l'obligation de port du casque	

pour les motocyclistes sikhs), projet de loi 29, M. Singh	
First reading agreed to.....	468
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	468
Human Rights Code Amendment Act (Genetic Characteristics), 2016, Bill 30, Mr. Colle, Ms. Jones / Loi de 2016 modifiant le Code des droits de la personne (caractéristiques génétiques), projet de loi 30, M. Colle, Mme Jones	
First reading agreed to.....	468
Mr. Mike Colle.....	468

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Hydro rates	
Mr. Norm Miller.....	468
Health care funding	
Mme France Gélinas	469
Climate change	
Mr. Arthur Potts	469
Hydro rates	
Mr. Ted Arnott	469
Privatization of public assets	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	470
Ice machines	
Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	470
Natural gas	
Mr. Todd Smith.....	470
Disaster relief	
Mme France Gélinas	470
Health care funding	
Mr. Ted Arnott	471
Disaster relief	
Mme France Gélinas	471
Hydro rates	
Mr. Todd Smith.....	471
Employment standards	
Mme France Gélinas	471
Autism treatment	
Mr. Ted Arnott	472

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

End Age Discrimination Against Stroke Recovery Patients Act, 2016, Bill 9, Mr. Coe / Loi de 2016 visant à mettre fin à la discrimination fondée sur l'âge envers les malades se rétablissant d'un accident vasculaire cérébral, projet de loi 9, M. Coe	
Mr. Lorne Coe.....	472
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	473
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	474

Mr. Bill Walker	475
Mme France G��linas	475
Mr. Granville Anderson	476
Mrs. Gila Martow	477
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	477
Mr. Ted Arnott	478
Mr. Norm Miller	478
Mr. Lorne Coe	479

**Ministry of Community and Social Services
Amendment Act (Social Assistance Research
Commission), 2016, Bill 6, Mr. Paul Miller / Loi de
2016 modifiant la Loi sur le minist  re des Services
sociaux et communautaires (Commission de
recherche sur l'aide sociale), projet de loi 6,
M. Paul Miller**

Mr. Paul Miller	479
Hon. Chris Ballard	481
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	482
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	483
Hon. Dipika Damerla	484
Mr. Bill Walker	485
Ms. Peggy Sattler	485
Mrs. Gila Martow	486
Mr. Paul Miller	486

**Ticket Speculation Amendment Act (Purchase and
Sale Requirements), 2016, Bill 22, Ms. Kiwala / Loi
de 2016 modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de
spectacle (exigences relatives    l'achat et    la vente
des billets), projet de loi 22, Mme Kiwala**

Ms. Sophie Kiwala	487
Mr. Todd Smith	488
Miss Monique Taylor	490
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	491
Mrs. Gila Martow	491
Mr. Peter Tabuns	491
Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris	492
Hon. Michael Coteau	493
Mr. Arthur Potts	493
Hon. Eleanor McMahon	493
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	494

**End Age Discrimination Against Stroke Recovery
Patients Act, 2016, Bill 9, Mr. Coe / Loi de 2016
visant    mettre fin    la discrimination fond  e sur
l'  ge envers les malades se r  tablissant d'un
accident vasculaire c  r  bral, projet de loi 9, M. Coe**
Second reading agreed to

**Ministry of Community and Social Services
Amendment Act (Social Assistance Research
Commission), 2016, Bill 6, Mr. Paul Miller / Loi de
2016 modifiant la Loi sur le minist  re des Services
sociaux et communautaires (Commission de
recherche sur l'aide sociale), projet de loi 6,
M. Paul Miller**

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott).....494

**Ticket Speculation Amendment Act (Purchase and
Sale Requirements), 2016, Bill 22, Ms. Kiwala / Loi
de 2016 modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de
spectacle (exigences relatives    l'achat et    la vente
des billets), projet de loi 22, Mme Kiwala**

Second reading agreed to

**Ministry of Community and Social Services
Amendment Act (Social Assistance Research
Commission), 2016, Bill 6, Mr. Paul Miller / Loi de
2016 modifiant la Loi sur le minist  re des Services
sociaux et communautaires (Commission de
recherche sur l'aide sociale), projet de loi 6,
M. Paul Miller**

Second reading agreed to

Private members' public business

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott).....495

Visitors

Mr. Jagmeet Singh

Flooding in Windsor and Tecumseh

Hon. Chris Ballard

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

**Promoting Affordable Housing Act, 2016, Bill 7,
Mr. Ballard / Loi de 2016 sur la promotion du
logement abordable, projet de loi 7, M. Ballard**

Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....495

Mr. Percy Hatfield

Mr. Chris Ballard

Mrs. Julia Munro

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong

Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....505

Mr. Peter Tabuns

Hon. Jeff Leal.....508

Mr. Todd Smith

Ms. Peggy Sattler

Hon. Chris Ballard

Mr. Peter Tabuns

Second reading debate deemed adjourned

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 29 September 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 29 septembre 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO REBATE FOR ELECTRICITY CONSUMERS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA REMISE DE L'ONTARIO POUR

LES CONSOMMATEURS D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 26, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act in respect of the cost of electricity /
Projet de loi 13, Loi concernant le coût de l'électricité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated September 28, 2016, I am now required to put the question. Mr. Thibeault has moved second reading of Bill 13, An Act in respect of the cost of electricity. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

It's a deferred vote.

Second reading vote deferred.

ELECTION FINANCES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE FINANCEMENT ÉLECTORAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 28, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to election matters / Projet de loi 2, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois en ce qui a trait à des questions concernant les élections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We're here to talk for the next 20 minutes about Bill 2, but I'm more interested in—rather than calling it the election finances act, we could probably quite easily call it the campaign finance scandal.

That's what it really is. This is all about the Liberals being caught yet again in a campaign finance scandal. But, Speaker, let me tell you—we've travelled all over Ontario this summer, and I can tell you two words: Fairness matters. People in Ontario want fairness. That's all that really counts at the end of the day. And right now, there's nothing fair about the system. There's absolutely nothing fair about what's going on.

The Liberals are caught yet again—that's why we're standing here—in a campaign finance scandal. This is in addition to the five OPP investigations that are going on in Ontario. Now we have yet another scandal. This is above and beyond the gas plants scandal that will go to trial in September 2017. This is above and beyond the Ornge helicopter scandal. We're still waiting for the conclusion of that, some resolution to that tragic and financial scandal as well. This is in addition to the two alleged bribery scandals in Sudbury, which will come to some conclusion in the near future as well, we hope. This is in addition but actually more to do with the OPP investigation into the wind turbine scandal involving Trillium and deleted files. This latest campaign finance scandal is in addition to all of those.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the Minister of Research and Innovation.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Point of order: I wonder why the debate of the member opposite has nothing to do with the subject matter of Bill 2.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to remind the member that we need to stay focused on the debate before us. Just be mindful of the debate.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. We are in the middle—we are seized with a campaign finance scandal, so I felt it was equally tied in to be able to talk about the other five scandals that are ongoing, because there are OPP investigations.

Let's go back to how nefarious this actually is. This started quite a while ago. This started with the Liberal Party and their many, many fundraisers that are tied in to the contracts that only they as a government can award. So that's why we're here. They got caught again.

This time it would appear that there is what we call a pay-to-play. If you pay—the Liberal Party, that is, their election coffers—you get to play with Ontario taxpayer money with contracts. That's what we're here for. There are many fundraisers but only one party can reward the people, and that is the Liberal Party. And they've been pretty darn good at their rewarding, I must tell you.

For instance, as we've seen quite recently in the Green Energy Act, we've got 30 companies—30—that were awarded the lucrative wind and solar contracts. We're

talking billions here. Of course, the Auditor General herself told us that we have paid \$9.2 billion for the same amount of green energy under the old contracts.

We're not debating the merits of green energy. That is going to happen. It's the \$9.2 billion more they paid for the same amount, and they paid that to the 30 donors to the Liberal Party who donated \$1.3 million. That's what we're here for. We're seized with a campaign finance scandal. They were paid \$1.3 million in fundraising and doled out billions of contracts only to those people—only to those people. That's what we're here for. We're here to talk about that.

We're here to talk about the fact that when the Liberals privatized Hydro One, when they had a fire sale sell-off of Hydro One, they did the same thing. They had fundraisers with the very people who were going to be doing the sale. This is heinous. Quite frankly, I'm not a lawyer, but I'm somebody who believes in fairness. I would only imagine that if this was a corporation trying to do that, we'd be seeing it very differently. We wouldn't be standing here in the chambers of the Legislature. We could very well be standing in a court of law, because something that has occurred is not what's fair to the people of Ontario.

These Liberal MPPs and cabinet ministers had orders from the Premier—orders—of the magnitude of the money they are to bring in. This one had an order to bring in \$500,000. That one had an order to bring in \$300,000. The only way they can do it, according to them, is to go after the very people they were going to reward with contracts. That's why we have a campaign finance scandal. I am quite certain that if this were an Enron-type company, we'd be hearing about this in a trial, not here in the Legislature.

0910

People want fairness, and they cannot get fairness from this government. That's why we end up with things like the highest energy costs in North America: because we are awarding contracts to people who are donating to the Liberal Party.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I know there have been some colourful words from the member leading the debate this morning. I want to remind the government side that—

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Misrepresentation.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We need to be respectful. I know the member is leading the debate this morning. I just want to remind the government side to be respectful. The shouting down is not respectful. I just want to remind the government side to be respectful.

I return back to the member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I realized you were standing to speak. I had a hard time hearing you because they were speaking over you, but I did hear a very unparliamentary word coming from that other side. I would appreciate it if that member would stand and apologize for that.

Interjection: Sit down.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: No, I don't have to sit down.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to ask the member who made the comment—I, as the Speaker, didn't hear it. If she wishes to withdraw it, she's welcome to do that. Anybody is allowed to withdraw their statements, and I'm just giving you an opportunity.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate your indulgence in that. Obviously, the fact that we've talked about the fact that we have the highest energy rates in North America yet again brought comments from the Liberal government.

We can continue—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the Minister of Research and Innovation.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Madam Speaker, I don't understand. The energy price has nothing to do with the subject matter of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you for that.

I'll return to the member from Nipissing and just remind him to stay focused on the bill.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Let me tell you how that ties in, Speaker. The fact that we've got a government that is awarding billions of dollars in energy contracts to companies that gave the Liberal Party \$1.3 million—this is the very point, I suggest to the minister. This is the very point.

We are alleging that they are tied in together. We are paying the highest energy rates in North America because the Liberal government took money from 30 energy companies and then gave them energy contracts that were higher than anywhere else. They overpaid. They gave them rich subsidies. There was a quid pro quo here: "We'll give you rich contracts that are higher than anywhere else in the world if you give us \$1.3 million." That's what I'm saying. That's why I can talk about the highest energy rates in North America. They're high because they took money to—they allowed \$1.3 million in donations to affect their decision on how to award these rich contracts. I'm talking about the \$9.2 billion—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I already reminded the member from Nipissing to be very careful with his choice of words. What I just heard is impugning motive, so you will need to withdraw.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Withdraw, Speaker.

They have charged the highest electricity rates in North America because they earned \$1.3 million in fundraising revenue and awarded an additional—I'm not talking about how much the contracts were. They are multi-multi-billions. The Auditor General told us it was an additional—a further—\$9.2 billion for something we could have got without paying that. That's why we're talking about energy here in the middle of a Liberal campaign finance scandal. Because that's what this is, Speaker. This is heinous and scandalous.

What's even worse is the fact that if you go back to 2004 in the government's proposed amendments to—I'm

sorry; if you go back to 2015 and look at the government's proposed amendments to the advertising act of 2004—in 2014, they started changing the rules so that they can fit in their new advertising. This is their new way to usurp the rules here, Speaker. They are talking about the fact that nobody can raise funds anymore to do campaign advertising, but according to the Auditor General's report, they will have the ability to use government funds to do their advertising. That's indeed what the auditor warned in 2015, and now that's indeed what has actually happened in 2016, only two years later, when they put their plan in.

The auditor: "Proposed Ontario Election Ad Rules Could Give Liberals Advantage." The Auditor General is on to them. She figured this out a long time ago, what this government is all about.

"Ontario Liberal Government Promotes Federal CPP with Taxpayer-Funded Ads." We're on to them. We've figured out their game. When they can't play by the rules—because, quite frankly, they rarely play by the rules. Now they're here trying to distract all of us, in the middle of this campaign finance scandal, with a new set of rules, as if they have some kind of a halo around them. But even they found ways to get around their own upcoming rules. Of course, we've now learned that the Premier has said her ministers won't be attending these. We now know they are, of course, still continuing to attend fundraisers. We know that. We see those advertised.

To try to get around the fact that only the government can have fundraisers and award contracts—nobody else on this side can have a fundraiser and award a contract, but we know they do. They received hundreds of thousands of dollars from the same people they paid, the government paid, to do the fire sale of Hydro One. We know that. There's a pattern here: You pay us in donations, and we give you a contract. "You pay us \$1.3 million, and we give you billions of dollars in contracts." So there's definitely a linkage here, Speaker, and I say to you, if this were a court of law, there may be a very, very—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I already reminded the member that you have to be very careful with your choice of words. It's not the first time I said it this morning. Again, you're making allegations and you're also imputing, potentially, motives. So please withdraw before we continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I withdraw, Speaker, and I thank you for your clarification.

I know they really don't like to hear these wounds that have come to the surface, but I can tell you—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order. Okay, guys. We need to be respectful in this chamber. I've already said it several times to the government side. Next time, I'm going to do a warning. I already warned a number of times. Remember, today it's one warning and then you'll be named.

I'm going to return to the member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. It's really apparent that when we talk about the Liberal campaign finance scandal, it gets under their skin. They've been caught again. Let's face it. It has been exposed. It has been exposed for everybody in the public to realize, to acknowledge, to understand that they got caught yet again.

One of their ways around these new rules that they're putting in to try to acknowledge the fact that they got caught is to now send their chiefs of staff. "Look at us. We're clean," they say. "We are not attending these fundraisers." So they send their chiefs of staff, who have the same power to award contracts. That's the difference when it comes to fundraising. We all need to fundraise. We all need that. But the government are the only people in this chamber who can award contracts, and that's what it appears they have done. Again, \$1.3 million in donations; billions of dollars, according to the Auditor General, overpaid for wind and solar contracts. So 30 people donate; there are 30 contracts that are let. It's as clear as a bell ringing here, what's happening.

0920

Now they're sending their chiefs of staff. That's very serious, Speaker. That's very, very serious, that they're trying to continue to do what they've been doing all along, and this time hopefully not get caught. But they got caught even doing that. You know—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the Minister of Housing.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Madam Speaker, under standing order 23—I could pick a whole number—let's say 23(h), (i), or (k)—I think this member needs to be reminded of his duties in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to overrule the point of order. I'm going to return to the member from Nipissing. I know you only have two minutes. Please be mindful of your choice of words.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for overruling him, Speaker. I appreciate that.

As I said when I first started, two words: Fairness matters. That's why we on this side get so passionate about this. They have done nothing that's fair. That's all people want. They go to work in the morning. They do their job. They pay their taxes. They live a good life—or they try to, anyway, here in Ontario. But overall, they hear the news, the "scandal" word and the "OPP" word, and they get a terrible feeling that all is not fair. That's why we're here today: because fairness matters and all is not fair in this chamber. All is not fair.

I think that's what the people genuinely want: to know that there's fairness going to happen. There's nothing fair about what's happening. This is heinous. This is absolutely terrible. This scandal has gone unaddressed for quite a while.

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The scandal has gone on quite a while, especially from some of the ministers who are piping up. They're the ones who got caught. They have a quota, Speaker, of how much money they have to raise. There's a quota system. We've seen it advertised—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the Minister of Housing.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Madam Speaker, as a minister, I have no quota, quite frankly. My reputation is being impugned—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): This is not a point of order. I'm going to return to the member for Nipissing to finish his debate.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. We've seen the quota system widely publicized in many media systems. I do thank the media. They dug deep into this. The Toronto Star, the Globe and Mail—they both dug very deep into this. It really is like a root canal, and, according to this government, it's about as painful as a root canal to them. It really, truly is.

What the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail have exposed is that they fundraise on this side and then it appears that they award contracts to the same people they fundraise from. That's the distinction here, Speaker. That's why there is a Liberal campaign finance scandal going on: because they got caught doing this. Only they are the ones who are allowed to reward donors with these lucrative contracts. Nobody has rewarded them better than this party.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was very interesting to listen to the member from Nipissing because we are here today discussing changes to the way we do fundraising for elections under the Election Finances Statute Law Amendment Act. Why? Well, this did not come out of thin air. It came out because people rebelled. When people found out that companies had to pay tens of thousands of dollars for a rubber-chicken dinner with the minister who was in charge of signing the contracts, they rebelled. Why? Because there are some entrepreneurs out there and some not-for-profit organizations that did not have tens of thousands to attend a rubber-chicken dinner with the minister, and they felt left out. They knew that if they did not pay up to the Liberal government fundraiser, their chances of getting a large renewable contract from the energy minister was zero.

So they came to see us. I'm sure they went to see the PC Party as well, and they told them, "This is wrong. We have a strong, large renewable project. We think that we should have as good a chance as any to get selected." But if they did not take part in those Liberal Party fundraisers, they knew that they were at the back of the line. So the people rebelled, and what did we get? We got this new Election Finances Statute Law Amendment Act.

I was hopeful that this new bill was going to achieve the goal of making the election fairer. Unfortunately, the bill as it stands now is not going to do this. It still has huge loopholes that favour whoever is in power, which happens to be the Liberal Party right now. So the reason for the bill is really yucky. It was because people were really not happy with what was going on with the Liberals, and they're not happy with the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Hon. Chris Ballard: I am delighted to be able to speak for a couple of minutes to this bill. I will do my best to stay on the topic and not impugn anyone's motives or behaviour.

I wanted to talk for a minute or two about contribution rates. I'm eager to hear what the opposition parties think about those. This is one thing that the committee conducting public hearings across Ontario heard all summer long, and I want to thank the members of that committee for the time they spent during the summer travelling the width and breadth of Ontario listening to organizations and individuals.

One thing they heard, and one thing they told me that they heard all summer long, was that we need to get big money out of politics. Right now, as the rules stand—rules that we all abide by and we all follow—an individual can donate over \$33,000 in an election year. We have been clear that donations do not influence policy decisions, and I'm also certain that donations do not influence questions or private members' bills asked by any party. But the bill aims to remove even the perception of influence over policy decisions, because we know that oftentimes perception is the reality.

That's why Bill 2 will lower the maximum contribution amount from over \$33,250 to just \$3,600. That's a 90% reduction in donations. Now, some have called for the complete removal of donations from our election system altogether, but I think that would be going too far.

I'll leave my comments there for now.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: I am pleased to bring some remarks on the 20-minute speech by my colleague from Nipissing. He was up and down in his chair an awful lot as members of the government caucus were popping up and down. It was like a game of whack-a-mole over there this morning.

I noticed a new strategy, though, when it comes to this latest scandal that we've seen this morning. The member from Nipissing is laying out the facts that have been in the newspapers and in the media now for months and months about this latest scandal that has been going on with this government. There seems to be a new strategy, though, that the Liberal government feels that if they stand up with this righteous indignation, maybe they'll scare the members of the opposition bench from continuing to point out the facts in this case. The facts speak for themselves, Madam Speaker. The facts speak for themselves.

All you have to do is look at the renewable energy file. It's the biggest crisis in Ontario right now, the price of electricity. The Auditor General says that the biggest reason for the increase is generation and the cost of generation. Then you look at the fact that we paid \$9.2 billion more for electricity than we should have, and you look at the new contracts that have been added to the grid, and they come from renewable energy companies that donated \$1.3 million to the Liberal Party. Over 99% of the new contracts were awarded to companies who paid to play with the Liberal government.

Those are the facts. I know that if they stand up and yell and scream and say that you're invoking some kind of wrongdoing—we're pointing out the facts. The facts are that this happened in Ontario. They got caught by the media. That's what led to this latest scandal, and that's the genesis of Bill 2 that we have before us today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?
0930

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a pleasure for me to rise today, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to participate in this rather extraordinary debate that has been unfolding in this Legislature over this last week.

It feels something like a parallel universe that we have been having here. I just heard the Minister of Housing talk about the people who participated in this debate over the summer and who talked about their desire to get big money out of politics.

We know that this whole bill was prompted by the disclosures and revelations in the media about cash-for-access fundraisers that the Liberals used to build their election coffers for the next election. Under Premier Wynne, they raised almost \$20 million between 2013 and 2015, and yet the bill that we are debating this morning is silent on cash-for-access fundraisers—not a word about cash-for-access fundraisers in this legislation.

We know that there was a news release that was issued while the committee was debating amendments to this legislation. But in this place, we don't debate news releases; we debate legislation. And this legislation includes nothing about cash-for access fundraisers, which was the whole impetus for us to be having this discussion in the first place.

The legislation does include, however, prohibitions on public interest groups from raising legitimate questions of public policy during election campaigns while allowing the government to advertise unlimitedly about what it is doing or its claims to advance policy discourse. It's shameful what this legislation does to chill public involvement in democracy. This is unfair and a disservice to all of us.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Nipissing to wrap up.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much for the opportunity to wrap up. I do want to thank the speakers from Nickel Belt, Newmarket–Aurora, Prince Edward–Hastings and London West.

Fairness matters, and what we are not seeing today is fairness. We are seized with yet another Liberal scandal. This time it's the Liberal campaign finance scandal. We're here because they got caught yet again. I've only been here five years, but we've spent a tremendous amount of those five years embroiled in one scandal after another.

The member from Newmarket–Aurora said to us “that donations do not influence policy decisions.” Well, then, how on earth did this Liberal government spend \$9.2 billion more for the same amount of energy contracts as under the old contract system? The Auditor General told

us that. We could have bought, had we stayed with the old contracts, the same amount of renewable energy for \$9.2 billion less. He may continue to say that donations do not influence policy decisions, but there's an appearance in the evidence that \$1.3 million was collected by the party, and an additional—a further—extra cost of \$9.2 billion was paid out for renewable contracts.

The member from Prince Edward–Hastings said it best: You can't get around this. It's so painfully obvious. It pains me to stand here—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, we'd like to continue debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

Applause.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Percy.

Madam Speaker, thank you allowing me to rise today on behalf of the residents of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie. I am honoured any time I can rise in this House and speak for the residents of my community.

I'm honoured because I am talking about something as important as political financing laws here in Ontario. The way we control fundraising, financing candidates and policing donations to parties in this province is an integral part of the outcome of all our elections. Since day one in this Legislature, I have committed to ensuring every resident in my riding has their voice heard, not just a certain group of interests or voters.

So many of my colleagues have raised concerns over the amendments to this bill. I know that so many residents came out to have their voices heard when the committee went on the road for input before the bill was killed when the Liberals decided to shut down the Legislature. Many of my colleagues have spoken about the issue of amendments. We are wondering why the recommendations made at committee were not included in Bill 2.

Today, I'm going to speak to the sections currently in the bill, because they already highlight the major problems with the amendments process on this bill. I hope sincerely that when we are addressing these issues, the government is listening. I hope the government will listen to what I and my fellow members in this chamber have to say, because it's too important to ignore.

During the debates around the first version of the bill, Bill 201, the Premier did not seem to want to listen to the opposition parties, but I hope that she has changed her mind on this issue. You see, we know what happens when we don't get this right. We know exactly what happens when only a handful of rich donors get to control the political system. Once politics becomes too expensive, the average person just stays home or they get

turned off. We have a duty to represent everyone in Ontario and ensure their voice is heard right here in this Legislature.

Let me address the issue of corporate and union donations first. Yes, this bill bans corporate and union donations, which the NDP has supported for a very long time. And why wouldn't we support that? We have always felt that large lobby groups shouldn't be able to pay to see and talk to the government. We have always believed that it is the people of this province, not big corporations, who should be able to influence government decisions, though I point out that there is a difference here.

When I was president of my local union, any political donation had to be passed through the membership. Madam Speaker, I want you to understand that. We had a membership meeting. They would question the leadership on where the money was going. It was their hard-earned union dues—dollars. It had to be approved by the membership before it could go to any party, whether it was the NDP—it was never the Conservatives—or the Liberal Party. But it was passed by the membership, and that speaks volumes for the labour movement.

That meant that people who contributed their money to the union had a vote on what to do with their money. It's not the same way with corporations. But either way, the NDP has always believed in the power of individual donations. We have already proven this with our fundraising. Between 2002 and 2014, the Liberal government received just over 50% of its money from corporations here in Ontario. On the other hand, during that same period of time the NDP received 79% of its donations from individual donors. Do you see the difference?

Individual donations and corporations: There's a big difference between what a CEO of a major corporation wants and what someone who works for a living, who donates what they can when they're able to, wants. There's a major difference between someone saving up to donate to a political party and a CEO who is just moving money from their corporation.

Individual donors are people who believe in a political message, and they play their small part to try to make it a reality. Individuals have always donated more than corporations to the NDP.

0940

Big money should never rule politics—never. The rich and famous should not be able to buy politicians. When I see that between 2002 and 2014 the Liberal Party raised 50% of its funds from corporations, the Conservative Party raised 46% of their money from corporations and the NDP raised 79% of its money from individual donors, it becomes clear who is working for the people of Ontario.

We are not a party that is bought and paid for by big corporations. By removing donations from the large shareholder, we give the power back to ordinary people of the province of Ontario—quite frankly, where the power should be. How could anyone disagree with that? The largest and really the only stakeholder the govern-

ment should be beholden to are the residents of the province of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, as some of you may know—I know my good friend from St. Catharines knows this—I did not grow up wealthy. My family had a lot of things to worry about, and figuring out how to donate to a politician was one of them. That taught me a lesson because even though my family couldn't donate, it didn't mean our voices didn't matter. It didn't mean I should abandon the political system and assume that I couldn't make a difference. I am living proof that you don't need to be a big political donor to make a difference, and I hope that is a lesson we pass on to the next generation of politicians.

It taught me a lesson that I saw in my practice yesterday when I sat down with Fran and Laura from my riding of Niagara Falls, where they live in Chippawa. Fran and Laura are incredible people who are living a modest life. They're doing everything they can to live with their hydro bills, but they just can't cover the bills anymore. The hydro prices are, quite frankly, disgusting and unnecessary.

When I was sitting down with them, they opened up their latest hydro bill that had arrived about 10 minutes before we got there—a bill that would cost them \$677 from the hydro company. They had done everything they could to conserve energy, and yet their—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member needs to remember that when I stand, you need to sit.

I just need to remind the member from Niagara Falls that we stay on topic, and the topic is election finance reform, not electricity or Hydro One or anything like that. Stick to election reform.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Do you think people who are struggling to pay their hydro bills can afford a Heritage Dinner for \$1,600 a plate? I tied that back into hydro; I think that works. It flows pretty good.

When they can't afford \$1,600 a plate, does that mean that their voice doesn't matter? Well, let me tell you something. Fran and Laura invited me into their home yesterday. They sat and talked with me, and with my leader Andrea Horwath, about what they do in our community, how they've lived there in Chippawa their entire lives and what a great place it is to live. Let me also tell you something else: If Fran and Laura want to sit with me and talk about our community, I prefer that they do that any day of the week instead of sitting with some CEO who thinks he can buy me with a big cheque.

Madam Speaker, the members in this House are the voice of the residents of Ontario, and we need to ensure that those voices are heard. Right now, I fear that Bill 2 does not ban the cash for fundraisers that got the Liberals in trouble in the first place. The residents of my beautiful riding of Niagara Falls have just as much right to meet with the minister as any wealthy donor does. The Premier is the Premier of the residents of Ontario, not just the ones who can pay. With that in mind, I have to say that

it's good to see the removal of donations from large corporations in the province of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, nothing less than the Toronto Star telling everyone that the government ministers had outrageous fundraising quotas started this government taking action on this issue. Imagine that: They were given a job of raising \$200,000 to \$300,000 from people that could talk to the government. So, for example—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I don't know what you've got against unions.

So, for example, if you—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. The member from Niagara Falls.

I just want to remind the government side—I already warned people. The next time I get up again, you will be warned. Okay? We need to have respectful conversation about this important debate.

The member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I thought the minister was responsible for the energy portfolio here in Ontario. I thought the minister was responsible for taking meaningful action to lower people's hydro bills so that 600,000 people in the province of Ontario aren't in arrears. Then we find out that instead of doing that job, the minister had to worry about raising hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Just use some logic here. If you're a minister and you're behind in your fundraising quotas and you get approached by a company that has lots of money to give but attaches some strings, how might a minister catch up?

While you're sitting there thinking about how a minister could catch up, there's something else you're not thinking about. You're not thinking about how to lower people's hydro bills. You're not thinking about how to make life better for the people of our province. Instead, you're thinking about how to make life better for the Liberal Party of Ontario.

That right there is a problem. Maybe the minister should spend some time listening to the businesses in Niagara Falls on how to lower hydro bills so they could bring hundreds of thousands of dollars into our communities.

When you look at that controversy that arose over the cash-to-see-your-minister fundraising scheme undertaken by the government, you would think that this would be a no-brainer. The people of Ontario discovered that the government was charging hundreds of thousands of dollars to see a minister, and they didn't like it. I don't think any of us like it. It makes sense to create a bill to remove that.

But then they seem to go further for no reason at all. They're now talking—and I think this is important. I think we all can relate to this, those that want to listen. They're now talking about banning MPPs from hosting barbecues or spaghetti dinners that charge \$25 to \$50 a ticket. Rather than focusing on how to eliminate the conflict of interest at the highest level of government,

they're looking at how to stop us from spending our summer at the backyards barbecuing. It's ridiculous.

I have a question for this House that is very simple. Has any MPP in here really had anyone call their office and complain that a minister was being bought by a \$50 ticket to a spaghetti dinner?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. Member from Niagara Falls, you need to withdraw that comment. You cannot use that unparliamentary language. You need to withdraw.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I withdraw. Sorry.

Okay, Madam Speaker. There's a major difference between a barbecue in my backyard and a dinner fundraiser that brings in \$2.5 million in one night. There's a difference between 100 local people coming to play a local golf tournament at a local golf course and a CEO from an energy sector paying tens of thousands of dollars to sit down with the Minister of Energy for a private night. There's a big difference.

That difference is particularly noticeable when those same people meeting with the energy minister or the Minister of Finance stand to make a profit from the fire sale of Hydro One. Those CEOs sit down with those ministers and expect a return on their money. They're going into that night looking to get something out of it. At my golf tournament—I know you're all interested in this—people there are hoping I shoot at least something close to par, and I couldn't even do that.

0950

Mrs. Gila Martow: On the first nine.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I didn't get close to par on the first hole.

My point is that the people of Ontario aren't dumb, and they aren't unreasonable. My point is that the people of Ontario understand this. They understand the difference between a spaghetti dinner and a \$1,500-a-plate dinner, even if the current government claims that it doesn't see that difference.

This is a nice story that I know we'll all like. The late, great MPP from Welland, Peter Kormos, was famous for the spaghetti dinners he held in his riding. They weren't much at all; he held them all the time in Welland. Then we have stories of ministers being paid thousands to meet with rich stakeholders because of their quotas. So I ask the question: On the one hand, you get a local worker paying 30 bucks for a Peter Kormos pasta dinner, and on the other hand, you get a Bay Street lobbyist paying \$10,000 to spend a night with a minister he's trying to lobby. Out of the two of them, who do you really believe was at risk of being influenced here? Who do you really think was letting money get in the way of their responsibility?

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'll let the minister listen to this. Who do we really think was letting money get in the way of their responsibility to serve the people of Ontario? Is it Peter getting 30 bucks from his neighbour Joe or is it the minister getting \$10,000 from a lobbyist who represents a

company making a bid to the minister? I'll let you answer that on your own time.

Madam Speaker, I'll tell you, the first time I ran for office was not an expensive affair. There were no \$1,500 dinners, let alone a \$2.5-million night. In fact, I was selling buttons out of my garage for \$2. That's right: We were selling them. People would come in and grab a button. They wanted to support us and we couldn't let them go until they paid us to pay for the cost of printing the button. The people then had no illusions. The pasta dinner was a way to be involved with your local riding association or a political movement. The buttons were a way to show support for a local union president running for office for the first time. It's wildly different than what we're hearing about in the minister's office these days.

Let's be serious here. Let's seriously remove the influence of big money on politics. Let's get back to what politics should be about, and quite frankly, that's serving all the people of this great province.

There are quite a few more issues I'd like to address with this bill—and I can see I'm going to run out of time. Another part is the section that deals with third-party advertising. Yes, we agree that there needs to be constraint and regulations put on third-party advertising that stops it from getting out of control, but what the government has here goes far beyond that. Instead, it looks like they're trying to stifle criticism about themselves all together. By banning third-party advertising, you're also banning the right of regular citizens to get together and focus on a cause. You're banning people from speaking out against what is wrong or standing up for what is right.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: One great example of how this is—and I've got 30 seconds; I want you to please listen rather than yell—a problem was the parents fighting cuts to autism services. I think every member of this House, or at least on this side of the House, was moved by their incredible efforts. The ability of everyday moms and dads to get together and fight for their children was incredible, and I'm glad that we, in particular the member from Hamilton Mountain, were able to help them succeed. But what if the parents hadn't won? What if the Liberal government continued to ram through cuts of essential services?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to rise in this House and to speak to the comments made by the members of the opposition. Members of the opposition talk about fairness, but in reality, the things they say and the things they do—there's a huge gap between the two. For example, the NDP invited the Premier of Alberta, Madam Notley, to come over here, and they invited oil companies to participate in a \$10,000-a-ticket fundraiser. That is a thing all parties are doing, and now they are teaching us a lesson.

But the fact is that this Premier, this government, has taken the initiative to make a level playing field and to reduce the current number for individual donations to

political parties, which in an election year is about \$33,000. This Premier and this government are reducing this amount from \$33,000 to \$3,600. This is a 90% reduction in the amount of a donation a person or company can make to a political party. As a result of this, all members of society, our province of Ontario, will have a chance to contribute to political parties; they will have a chance to contribute to candidates, to nominations and leaderships. That is the way this party, this government and the Premier are providing an opportunity for every member of this society to participate in the democratic process. That's what we are doing. The members opposite, in their remarks, go off to so many other irrelevant conversations they are bringing to this conversation. This is as simple as this: a 90% reduction in the maximum amount of contribution which every person can make to a political party or a candidate or a nomination candidate. That's what we have been doing. That's what we have been doing and that's what it's all about.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I think everybody is sort of skirting around the real issue here, and the real issue is selling access to government contracts. All you have—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Thornhill needs to withdraw.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I withdraw.

The real issue here is selling access to ministers—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Mrs. Gila Martow: —selling access to government ministers who have the ability to sign—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to remind members: This is a very important debate. You need to be mindful of your choice of words. The member from Thornhill, you need to withdraw.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Withdraw. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Grant Crack: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: I think it's tradition in this place that when the Speaker rises, every member in the House actually sits down. On two occasions, that just didn't happen. I would ask all members—if you could remind them—to have a little bit of respect for the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I return to the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much. I'm surprised that you can tell when I'm standing or sitting, because I'm so short. Thank you for that reminder.

I think it's very clear that the public understands what's going on here. The public understands that ministers were very involved in fundraising. The public understands there were even quotas put on some of the ministers, and the public does understand that we need to fundraise to run our campaigns. But there has to be a limit. There has to be a line where it doesn't cross the line, because otherwise the public loses respect for the entire process of what we're trying to do here.

We're all coming from our ridings, and we're coming here to debate bills. We want to feel that we're having input and we're being respected for what we're doing here. When that line is crossed in terms of how fundraising is done, we lose that respect. So I would remind the government that words are important—I agree that words are important—and how you fundraise is equally important.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further questions and comments.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to congratulate the member from Niagara Falls on the work he put into this debate, knowing that New Democrats—we were hoping for change in the province, and again this Liberal government has let the people of Ontario down. This is not the government that Kathleen Wynne had promised she would be to the people of Ontario.

There are many changes within this bill, but there are still more changes to come, which we don't even have the opportunity to debate here in this Legislature. The member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington had brought these concerns to the House earlier this week, and the member from Kitchener—Waterloo quite frankly agreed, talking about the fact that when we don't have all of the facts in front of us and the government is going to be bringing in changes later on—after we've done the debate process—that causes concern.

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It's really unfortunate that the Liberal government had been asked to join The Agenda on Tuesday evening but they refused, not being able to defend their own bill that's in front of them.

The Agenda will show tonight, with the member from Kitchener—Waterloo and the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington. The Liberal government will not be a part of that show, because they are not willing to—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to remind the member from Hamilton Mountain to stay focused on the bill, not on a TV show. We're debating this bill dealing with election reform. Thank you.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the time that I've had to speak to this matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm pleased to rise today to discuss this bill. I have to say that I was pleased that the committee conducting public hearings on this subject met all summer long and travelled across the province. I was also really pleased that we did manage to have constructive debates on this subject with constituents.

What I'm not pleased about is that the opposition parties have contrived this slogan, "cash for access." Now, let's really unpack this language. What does it mean? What is being implied?

What the slogan means is that you can't see your MPP or you can't see a minister. But the fact is that everybody in this House knows that we constantly see constituents in our ridings and in this place, and constituents and

stakeholders are always seeing ministers, having nothing to do with fundraisers. This happens all the time, and every member of those opposition parties knows that that's the truth.

This bill aims to remove even the perception of influence over policy decisions. The opposition is upset because they have just as many fundraisers as we do. This is why Bill 2 will lower the maximum contribution amount, from \$33,250 to just \$3,600. That is a 90% reduction. We are responding to concerns. We are listening to the public.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Niagara Falls to wrap up this round of debate.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm actually surprised at the last speaker trying to compare a golf tournament that I run to a \$17,000 round table discussion with a minister—just saying.

I'd also like to address somebody from the Liberal Party who yelled out while I was speaking about union donations. I was very clear on union donations. We're in favour of union donation bans. As a matter of fact, we were the first party to call for it, so there's no confusion.

But what's interesting about unions is, unlike corporations—corporations don't have a board meeting and have a big discussion and then take it to their shareholders and vote on who they're going to give money to. In the union movement, what they do is, they have a membership meeting, usually every month, and their members would come to a hall. They would be able to debate which party they think is going to speak on behalf of their best interests and make a decision on who they're going to give their hard-earned union dues to. There's a big difference when you allow the membership to vote. We were the first party—just to be clear—to call for union donation bans.

Today, 79% of all money I raise comes from individual donors. In the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party—because you're both very close to the same—50% of all the money that you get comes from corporations. So if you want to have a level playing field, let's take all the money you have raised over the last year with these meetings with ministers—right or wrong, you've met with them; you've raised millions and millions of dollars. Why don't we level the playing field and start from scratch? What we'll do is, we'll donate all the money you got in those meetings to Project Share or a food bank. That would make sense.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'll be sharing the time we have remaining with the President of the Treasury Board.

I am absolutely delighted to have this opportunity to speak to this bill, primarily because I want to focus and think about some of the things that we're hearing from the other side of the House. It is absolutely egregious that the member from Nipissing can come up with what I think are—our whip characterized it, and he's been around a long time, as the worst political speech he's ever heard in this House. Had he repeated half of what he

said in this House outside of this House, there would be lawsuits up against him.

To continually repeat things that he fundamentally knows don't represent the facts and to be warned and cautioned about it on a repeated basis and to repeat them again, to repeat things like we have the highest electrical rates in North America—we have said in this House and we've shown the facts on a repeated basis that that is just not true. That's just absolutely—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order. I already reminded the members from all three parties that this needs to be respectful. I'm going to start warnings. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings: no more shouting. You've been warned.

The member from Beaches–East York

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. And then, the member for Thornhill, in her remarks—twice you had to stop her making those allegations in this House. You cautioned her once and she repeated it within seconds. If that's not cause for a member to have to sit down and lose their time—Speaker, I'm not challenging your ruling. I very much appreciate the way you're keeping order in this House. But it's egregious.

Now, let's be very clear. This whole concept of cash for access is a slogan. It is something that has been made up to draw attention to something which was never inappropriate. We are all playing by the same set of rules, and for the members opposite to be drawing this inference that people are happy with the things we are doing and that somehow is directly aligned to what we're doing, again, is totally egregious.

What I worry about is, for instance, last week we debated a private member's bill from the member from Huron–Bruce, with unanimous approval in this House. It related to the use of pesticides in the province of Ontario and the rules. She came up with the notion that we have to be a little bit more careful about: Do we have enough agrologists? I believe very sincerely that the member from Huron–Bruce thinks that she's doing what is the right thing to do. I respect that in her.

But then, I get to realize—and I know—that she received an almost \$1,000 contribution from CropLife. I wonder who CropLife is. They're an organization, a third party, which is funded by all the pesticide companies. The bill she brought forward directly assists the pesticide companies who take issue with the regulations from here. So I wonder: Does she really believe in the intent of her private member's bill—

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Speaker, the members of the government caucus were standing up over and over again against the fact that the member for Nipissing was allegedly impugning motive. What is the member for Beaches–East York doing? He needs to be called to order.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to let the member know that he's stating the facts; he's not imputing any motives. Facts are allowed in this chamber, as you already know.

I will return to Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. I am stating the facts.

It's not just the fact of that \$1,000 or those contributions. Patrick Brown, the Leader of the Opposition, received just under \$10,000 from CropLife. And I will point out, it's well known in their literature, when they go out to seek stakeholders, they go out, and their own—I've seen the email, Speaker, where they say, "Find stakeholders so that you can ask questions, so that you can bring private members' bills in exchange for contributions," if those are the views they support. I'm concerned by that.

1010

I also know that the member who's in the back corner there from—from—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Arthur Potts: —Prince Edward–Hastings has asked questions in this House about the Merit OpenShop Contractors.

Mr. Todd Smith: No, I haven't.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm pretty certain, but I may be wrong. Maybe it was the member from Owen Sound.

Next, on the non-construction employer section—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. I'm going to recognize the member from Prince Edward county.

Mr. Todd Smith: Clearly, if he's going to impugn motive, the member should know the facts. Clearly he doesn't know the facts; he just admitted that himself.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to remind the member from Beaches–East York to please stick with the facts.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order. It's never too late—it's 10 after 10—to warn people.

I'm going to remind the member from Beaches–East York to stay with the facts. You only have five more minutes before I recess the House. Please stay to the facts, and no colourful language, please and thank you.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. I apologize to the member if it was in fact him or another member of his caucus who was asking those questions. That is not, in my mind, inappropriate, but with the allegations that are being levelled against us on this side of the House—if they were being true to the purpose of what they're alleging against us, they should put those allegations themselves. On that note, I will sit down and let the President of the Treasury Board maintain the next four minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to speak to this bill on fundraising and rules in the election financing act. I think I'd really like to start to talk about

the way in which all parties are similar. What we have been hearing this morning is an extensive catalogue from the opposition parties trying to convince the world that somehow they're pristine and the government is bad. The member from the third party talked about spaghetti dinners as if only the NDP has spaghetti dinners.

Interjection: At Barberian's?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Well, that's a whole different issue. We'll talk about that in a minute.

I have spaghetti dinners. I'm guessing that there are a lot of my colleagues here this morning who have spaghetti dinners. All kinds of people from all three parties have spaghetti dinners, strawberry socials or whatever it is that's good for your riding. Frankly, I have a lot of Italian history in my riding, and spaghetti dinners are good. We all do those sorts of things so that we can engage with our constituents at fundraisers. That's great; that's fine. That's a good thing for people to do.

But it isn't just government members who have had high-priced dinners in the past, or high-priced donors. We heard an extensive catalogue from the member from Nipissing where he tried to connect contributions from various forms of energy companies to the cost of electricity. You know, Speaker, I've had an opportunity to read the contributors to the Leader of the Opposition's leadership campaign, and one of the things I noticed was that there was a major solar company who gave him not one but two significant contributions. Now, I don't know why. I have no desire to impute motive, but the reality is that there were all sorts of corporate donations which went to the Leader of the Opposition during his campaign.

Then we think about the third party. The third party, in order to raise funds for the third party, had the Premier of Alberta come. And do you know what they charged energy companies to meet with the leader of the NDP here and the Premier of Alberta—what those oil companies paid? It was \$10,000 a crack for dinner. So I just want to get it on the record that what we have here is the pot calling the kettle black.

What I would like to actually just wrap up here with is some of the things that are actually in the bill, because you would never have figured that out from the debate this morning, Madam Speaker. The bill will in fact, if passed, ban corporate and union donations. It will lower the contribution limits that anybody can make to a candidate. It will create a clear definition of third-party advertising. That's something that the Chief Electoral Officer has said that we need to do; we're doing it. It strengthens the limits on what the government can do in terms of advertising pre-campaign so that no government of any political stripe can take advantage of that position. We'll bring forward an amendment in January—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it's 10:15, I'll be recessing the House until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to introduce Wendy Warne, who's the grandmother of page Nicole Vaxvick. Wendy is in the members' gallery this morning. Welcome, Wendy, to Queen's Park.

Mr. Norm Miller: I am pleased to welcome volunteers with the MS Society of Canada today: Barbara Dickson and Amanda Murray, who I had the pleasure of meeting earlier this morning, and the other volunteers. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to welcome some young lads who are here to take part and learn about Queen's Park today. Lukas Simpraga and Everett Rieder are here with their dads, Randy Simpraga and Matt Rieder, who are two corrections officers out of the Windsor detention centre. We welcome them here to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It is my pleasure to rise here today in the House to introduce a number of guests visiting from Portugal on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Arsenal do Minho of Toronto, in my riding of Davenport. Visiting us here today is Ricardo Rio, who's the mayor of Braga; and Frank Ferreira, Manuel Marques and Tony Letra, all from Arsenal do Minho. Bem-vindo a todos. Welcome.

Mr. Bill Walker: Melanie Grein, mother of page captain Paul Grein, from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is in the gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Paul Miller: In the west gallery, I'd like to welcome Laura Cattari. Laura is from the Fix the Gap campaign for social assistance.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to be able to welcome the parents of page captain Declan McPherson, Heather and Peter McPherson, and their wonderful son Hamish McPherson, who I'm sure will be down here as a page himself one day. Welcome.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'd like to draw members' attention to the east gallery. We have some unusual and very special guests today: The secretary of the environment for the great state of California, my friend Matt Rodriguez; and the Honourable David Heurtel, l'honorable David Heurtel, le ministre de l'Environnement du Québec. Could you please give them a warm Ontario welcome?

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I just wanted to welcome to the members' east gallery Becky Coles. She's a producer with Newstalk 1010 radio, and is kind enough to have me and a number of other members of the Legislature on the program in the morning with John Moore once in a while. Welcome, Becky.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: On behalf of my seatmate, the honourable member from Don Valley East, I would like to welcome some friends that he has in the gallery: Derrick Mealiffe and Jennifer Platsko.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I would like to introduce—from the MS Society, who I had a great meeting with this mor-

ning—Jonathan Allenger and Yves Savoie. Welcome to Queen's Park.

WEARING OF CARNATIONS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I believe we have unanimous consent to wear a red carnation in honour of Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada day at Queen's Park, and their invitation for us to their lunch reception in 228.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nickel Belt is seeking unanimous consent to wear the carnations. Do we agree? Agreed.

Point of order from the member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, we seek unanimous consent for the immediate second and third reading passage of Bill 23, the Islamic Heritage Month Act, 2016, in time for Islamic Heritage Month, October 2016.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from London—Fanshawe is seeking unanimous consent for second and third reading. Do we agree? I heard a no.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. According to Innovative Research Group poll results that were highlighted in the National Post, the people of Ontario have never been so angry.

Why are they angry? Maybe it's because this government has lost \$6 billion giving energy away to places like New York, Pennsylvania and Michigan.

Maybe it's because, according to the Auditor General, between 2006 and 2014, the people of Ontario have been overcharged \$37 billion for electricity in global adjustment fees.

Maybe it's because this government has overpaid \$9.2 billion for renewable contracts while the Liberal Party took \$1.3 million in donations from 30 companies.

There are a lot of reasons why the people of Ontario would be angry, but I want to ask the Premier: Why do you think the people of Ontario are so angry at your energy policies?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me once again talk about what has happened in this province on electricity generation. We inherited an electricity system that was badly degraded. It was dirty. The grid was dirty. We were plagued with brownouts and blackouts, smog—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not helpful.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, if the both of you want to keep going, we'll go to warnings.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We took that dirty, unreliable system and we cleaned it. We invested in it. We now have an electricity grid that is 90% renewable.

The shutting down of the coal-fired plants in this province and the investment in a renewable industry was the single largest initiative in terms of reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in North America. We're proud of that. We've done away with smog days and reduced that pollution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: Last night, CTV's Paul Bliss broke a shocking story. Hydro One has been collecting money specifically to pay for equipment they deem very high-risk for failure. But Paul Bliss learned that there are still 111 transformers that are in dire need of repair. So much for the Premier's talking points on reliability. For years, this government has been approving rate increases, then failing to fix transformers. They're not bringing reliability to our system.

So my question is: What did that money go for? It was supposed to be for repairs. Was it used to pay the \$4-million salary that you approved for the CEO? Was it the \$24 million that the Premier approved for the new executive members? Because it certainly wasn't going to fix the transformers.

Why has the Premier allowed Hydro One to raise rates but not fix the system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy is going to want to speak in the final supplementary, but let me just say—and we have visitors here from California and from Quebec with whom we are partnering. We are partnering to continue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

I think it is instructive for our visitors and our partners to hear the rhetoric from the other side, from people who don't support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, who don't support the changes that we have made to make our grid a clean electricity grid to do away with smog days and to reduce pollution in the air. They don't support that.

But the reality is that we are steadfast. We are going to continue to invest in our electricity system. We are going to continue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and work with enlightened jurisdictions like Quebec and California.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

We're edging towards warnings, number one. Number two, always speak to the Chair. And audiences are not allowed to participate in the House business.

Final supplementary.

1040

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: I can understand why the Premier referenced Quebec being here today because they should be here thanking Ontario because this Premier has been giving away Ontario electricity, sometimes even paying Quebec to take it, because of the contracts that this Premier signed in return for Liberal Party donations.

Back to the Premier: I received an email—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm ready to admonish one side, and the other side follows along. It's not easy for me, so I will probably just decide to move to warnings. We are now in warnings, and I'll be fast with them.

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, what do these reckless energy policies mean for people? I received an email to my Simcoe North constituency office from Mary. She is a member of the Canadian forces and a single parent of two children. She has sacrificed a lot to serve her country but because of this government's hydro policies, she now has to choose which bill she won't pay each month so she can keep the lights on. She has cancelled her cable and phone and all of her kids' extra-curriculars. She is now saying that she has to leave Ontario. She's asking for a different posting.

My question to the Premier is: Why are you doing this?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to say that we understand that there are people in the province who are having trouble paying their electricity bills. We understand that, Mr. Speaker, which is exactly why, in the throne speech, we introduced an initiative that will take the provincial portion of the HST off people's electricity bills; for rural communities, up to a 20% reduction on their bills; and expand the industrial conservation initiative to help businesses deal with their electricity bills. We understand that. We know that people need support, which is why we have a range of programs in place.

But, Mr. Speaker, the investments that we have made in our electricity system to make it clean, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—the opposition says that we haven't made investments. We most certainly have made investments: over 10,000 kilometres of line. We've made those investments. I sit—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville is warned, and I've got three others in my head; the next time they speak, they'll be warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I sit at a table with Premiers from across the country, and I know that it is in the best interests of the people of Ontario that we work with Quebec, that we work with Manitoba, that we sign agreements and we find ways to share power, which is exactly what we're doing, to an unprecedented level.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. David Zimmer: Raymond, you're on the wrong side of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation is warned. Anyone else care to say something?

New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Minister of Energy defended the Ontario

Energy Board's decision to bury the cost of the cap-and-trade in people's bills. The Liberals have no problem showing their Band-Aid rebate solution as a line item on hydro bills—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. The member from Hamilton Mountain is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Why shouldn't cap-and-trade be a line item on the natural gas bills? After all, isn't this government supposed to be in favour of being open and transparent?

Mr. Speaker, directly to the Premier: Why is the Premier afraid to show the true cost of the cap-and-trade plan? What is she hiding? Why would she not allow it in the bill? It's inconsistent with what she's doing on the rebate. Yes or no: Will you add it on the bill? Will you be transparent?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to thank the member of the official opposition for the question, because it's an important one for me to continue to reiterate. We're not comparing apples to apples in that question. We've been very transparent all along about what the cost is going to be of cap-and-trade, but not acting on cap-and-trade and not acting on climate change, Mr. Speaker, would cost so much more.

The OEB is a quasi-judicial organization that makes its decision, and we respect that decision. They have based this, basically, as saying, "This is the cost of doing business." We don't see the cost of the pipes on the bills. We don't see the cost of labour on the bill. So they made the decision. They did consultations with many, many organizations and with stakeholders right across the province. This is the decision that they came up with and this is the decision that we respect.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier. By not putting the cost of cap-and-trade on the bill, Liberals are throwing the natural gas companies under the bus. It will look like the companies are raising prices, when in fact it's the Liberals' cap-and-trade scheme that will force prices up.

Why would they want to do that? Well, maybe it's because the Premier is hosting a \$1,000 dinner next week at Menergy, a Chinese energy company that wants to replace natural gas. The previous Liberal cabinet plan to ban natural gas was exposed by Adrian Morrow in the *Globe and Mail*, forcing the Liberals to retreat—not to mention they are still mandating net-zero homes, another way of forcing people off natural gas.

Is this the Liberals' secret agenda, trying to force people off natural gas? When will their attacks on affordable home heating end?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Absolutely no one is trying to force anyone off natural gas. We're actually expanding natural gas. I guess they can't hear it. The only thing that this group is trying to do is put people back on puffers. We eliminated all coal-fired generation. We've invested

in our system, our natural gas system: \$200-million loan programs to get more communities and more municipalities and First Nations onto natural gas, a \$30-million grant program that is being looked after by the great Minister of Infrastructure.

We look forward to having the conversation and getting more of our communities on natural gas to give that choice to as many families in communities right across our great province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Before we move forward: People that are sitting in different seats, I still know who you are. I still know what riding you are, and you're actually getting closer to me, which means I hear you even more. I'm just saying.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: I can understand why the Premier wouldn't want to answer these questions. Her government's energy policy is an unmitigated disaster. But I hope the Premier will answer this question.

A few months ago, CTV's Paul Bliss exposed the tax on a tax, just another thing the Liberals tried to hide. So let's recap: The Liberals tried to ban natural gas. They are burying the cost of cap-and-trade on natural gas bills, and the Liberals tried to hide the tax on a tax until Paul Bliss exposed it. How far will this government go to hide their true plan to rid the province of natural gas and affordable home heating?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: To the Minister of the Environment.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Let's press the pause button, because the Leader of the Opposition has a plan to raise carbon prices between \$110 and \$150 a tonne with zero revenues to help people adjust to it. That means rates would be seven times higher. But maybe he's flip-flopped again like he did on sex ed and climate change and choice and so many other things, because he's got more positions than he's got members on his side.

We will not support a \$110 increase in people's bills like he will.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

New question.

1050

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. The Premier doesn't want to talk about the privatization of local hydro utilities. She says it's up to the municipalities. But that's not the whole story. The Liberals—

Hon. Brad Duguid: You should read the Globe and Mail.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development and Growth is warned.

Finish your question, please.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: But that's not the whole story: The Liberals can encourage the privatization by offering special tax loopholes. The government has a choice. Is the Premier going to encourage the privatization of Toronto Hydro by creating a tax loophole?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have answered this question. I've said, and it remains the case, that it is up to the city of Toronto council and the mayor to have this discussion and to make a decision about their utility. It is up to them.

If the member opposite is interested in that discussion, he should talk to the members of council for the city of Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The facts are very different from what the Premier is putting forward. The reality is the Premier can make it a lot easier for Toronto Hydro and other local utilities to privatize if she gives the municipalities a tax break. That means the Premier won't be sitting back and waiting for municipalities to make the decision. That means the Liberal government will have a direct role in the privatization of local hydro utilities. The media are reporting that the Premier has said she "will not stand in the way of any push by Mayor John Tory to privatize Toronto Hydro."

Is the Premier going to make it easier for local hydro utilities to privatize by providing a tax break?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: As the Premier said, the decision to privatize Toronto Hydro is up to Toronto city council. There are no ifs, and or buts, Mr. Speaker; that is the council that makes the decision.

What I'm thinking that the third party is confusing is privatization and consolidation. We have over 70 LDCs, over 70 utilities, right across the province. We would like to see that number come down, so we've put forward voluntary consolidation to actually have these companies come together to find savings. The Independent Electricity System Operator has said that there will be about \$1 billion in savings for the ratepayers if we have some of this consolidation. So I think, Mr. Speaker, that the third party is confusing privatization and consolidation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Absolutely not. There's no confusion here. In fact, I agree that the city and municipalities have the decision. But if the city of Toronto, for example, were to sell Toronto Hydro, they would have to pay \$200 million in taxes to the provincial government in a transfer tax fee, so the Liberal government can actually encourage this decision if they waive that tax.

Liberal insiders say that the Premier is interested in waiving this provincial transfer tax and encourage the privatization so that privatizing Toronto Hydro could give the Liberals "political cover for their own privatization of Hydro One." My question is very simple: Will the Premier help the privatization of local hydro utilities by waiving the provincial taxes—yes or no?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Well, the member opposite has it all wrong, because, in fact, when we were looking at Hydro One and our ability to broaden its ownership, it did, in fact, incur a degree of deferred tax, which we benefited from as the people of Ontario to the effect of, again, enabling us greater value to the Trillium Trust, which is now going to be used directly for infrastructure.

But the member opposite, in fact, has his own utility which is under question now, which is going to benefit from a consolidation because of the benefits that we've provided for some tax relief with Brampton hydro, Enersource, Horizon and PowerStream. All of that consolidation is giving great efficiency for that member's constituents, which he apparently opposes as well. That's unfortunate because this member and his constituents will benefit from some of these initiatives and again we'll be able to invest even more into the infrastructure.

Ultimately, the people of Toronto, the council of Toronto—it's their decision to make.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is again to the Premier. Let's make it clear: No one in this province benefited from the privatization of Toronto Hydro but for the Liberal Party and their elite friends.

People across Ontario are concerned about how they're going to keep the lights on and how they're going to warm their house this winter. Privatization doesn't mean that hydro agencies will have different owners, as the Liberals like to claim; it means that prices will go up, costs will go up. As one investor told media, if Toronto Hydro is privatized, the new owners will "expect a return on their investment and the obvious way is through further rate increases for Toronto Hydro's 730,000 customers."

It's very clear that privatization increases costs. The question is, will the Premier rule out any further privatization of our hydro system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased to rise and answer the question for the honourable member. As he well knows, the OEB is a quasi-judicial organization that's not part of the government. They set the rates.

The broadening of Hydro One has actually helped our government continue to invest in infrastructure right across the province. It's not just us who are saying that. There's a great report today in the *Globe and Mail* from reporter Tim Kiladze that talks about the Hydro One sale as a "home run." He points out that when the PCs were in power, they privatized the 407 at a cut-rate price. As he says, luckily the Premier "wisely listened to her advisers and decided to sell 60% of Hydro One in chunks." This strategy allows the province to maximize the value of the sale while still maintaining a controlling stake. His analysis is spot on. I continue to look forward to working with this government to build infrastructure right across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: People want to build a good life for themselves and, what's more important, they want to build a better life for the next generation. They want to make sure that they have the same as, if not better than, what they had. But the rising cost of living makes that very difficult.

Privatization of how Ontario generates electricity has increased the cost of electricity from about four cents per kilowatt hour to 18 cents per kilowatt hour. That's what privatization is doing. The Liberal government is opening up the privatization of Hydro One, and naturally that's going to increase costs even further. Now they're opening up a further door to the privatization of local hydro utilities. Selling off more of our hydro system means less options and less opportunities. It means the next generation will have a difficult time—a harder time instead of an easier time.

Will the Premier make it clear and commit to ending any further privatization of our public hydro utility system?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We're on track to realize the target of \$9 billion generated through the IPO, and through that—I was going to continue to talk about the report in the *Globe and Mail*. Broadening the ownership of Hydro One is smart policy. It's supporting this government's significant investment in infrastructure right across the province.

Talking about creating jobs, part of the money that we're getting from the broadening of this sale went towards \$173 million that my friend from the Ministry of Transportation was able to announce for expanding Highway 69 to four lanes, making our roads safer and making sure that we create hundreds of jobs throughout the province as we build Ontario up.

We've got investments happening from Kenora to Ottawa to Windsor—all over this province—because we recognize the importance of building infrastructure, and broadening the sale of Hydro One does just that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: There's no broader ownership than every single person in this province owning their public utility. I don't understand how the government can stand up and make this ludicrous suggestion.

People are worried that the Premier is getting ready to help privatize local utilities. People have seen this movie before. They've seen it with Hydro One. They've seen it with this government never running on this idea of selling off Hydro One, and then going ahead and selling off our public utility. We know the Liberals haven't run on—and they haven't spoken about this in their throne speech—the sale of local hydro utilities, but now we're seeing that they're not ruling that out as well.

Privatized hydro is pushing people over the edge. Will the Premier once and for all rule out any further privatization of our public utilities? Just rule it out.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Again, thanks for the question. He started off his question talking about how it's important to make sure that every single Ontarian owns a portion of Hydro One, and we'll continue to do that. Ontario will remain the single largest shareholder of

Hydro One. Legislation requires that we keep a minimum of 40% ownership, and no other shareholder group is going to own more than 10% of that.

1100

Every single Ontarian in this province is talking about what they want and what they want to own. What about owning new transit? What about making sure we're building bridges? What about owning decent roads right across the province? That's what Ontarians want. They want jobs and growth, and we're providing that. We're building Ontario up, and we'll continue with that focus and make sure it happens for all families right across this province.

TABLING OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the President of the Treasury Board. By law, this government is to table the province's public accounts by the end of this week, but on Tuesday the President of the Treasury Board rose in the House and said that because of ongoing discussions with the Treasury Board and the Auditor General, the books would be delayed. But an insider says this discussion is more of a dispute and that the Treasury Board is challenging the Auditor General's accounting.

Mr. Speaker, will the President of the Treasury Board please explain why she will not be tabling the public accounts on time? What is this government hiding?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Let me answer the last part of the question first. We're not hiding anything. If he reflected on the rest of my statement to the House, he would know that I had also said that I am pleased to report to the House that, in fact, we are on track to meet our deficit targets as published in last year's budget and the fall economic statement from a year ago. So we're not hiding anything. We are on track to meet our targets.

What I did say, Speaker, was that there are some complex accounting issues that we're working on. We're working on them with the Auditor General. I have directed my officials at Treasury Board to work with the Auditor General to come up with a plan to table the books as soon as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the President of the Treasury Board: Something just doesn't seem right. Just one week ago, the deputy minister at the Treasury Board quit. Now the Liberals are going to miss the tabling deadline. Why is that? Has this government been using shady accounting practices? Are the debt and deficit higher than the government is letting on?

Mr. Speaker, what exactly is going on in that office? What else is this government trying to hide?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I just caution the member that on the tightrope walk, it's close, and if it gets anything near again, I will ask the member to withdraw.

President of Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would repeat that we have absolutely nothing to hide. There is a discussion going on between the accountants in the Auditor General's office,

the accountants in the Treasury Board Secretariat and the accountants at the Ministry of Finance. It's quite a complex accounting issue. I've asked that they come together and find a solution to that and that we will table the books as quickly as possible.

Once again, I want to assure the member, Speaker, that we have absolutely nothing to hide and that, in fact, we are on target to meet the deficit plan that we tabled in the budget and the fall economic statement.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. People in rural and northern Ontario are being hammered by sky-high hydro delivery charges, which are often higher than the actual cost of the power consumed. The Wynne government has promised to reduce the rural delivery charges by 12%. In the House yesterday, the Premier stated that rural and northern communities have access to the 20% reduction, which is 12% plus the HST.

My question is very simple: Will all northern and rural customers qualify for the promised 12% delivery charge reduction?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to thank the honourable member for his question.

As we said all along, families in rural and remote communities that have been qualifying for the RRRP will continue to get the RRRP. If the families don't have the RRRP, they get the 8%. The one thing that we're very proud of is we're making sure that the RRRP, which has never increased, is now going to \$45 a month, or 20% on an average bill. We're making sure that the families that are in northern Ontario, that are in rural parts of our province, can save as much as possible.

It's difficult for me to actually have a broad sweep with all people because everyone has a different designation on their bill. The important thing to recognize is that every family will be getting at least 8% right across the province, and those families that are in northern parts—or rural parts—will get the 20%.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is again to the Premier. This morning, in a response, she said there will be a 12% reduction for rural communities. She didn't say "rural and remote"; she said "rural communities." The minister now says he's backtracking a bit because several times in this House it was 20% for everyone.

There are 1.8 million people in rural Ontario, but apparently only 300,000 will be getting the full rebate. People need to know: Will the Premier tell people who were promised but won't be getting it?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: So now it's a debate about semantics: rural, remote, northern. I know the folks in northern Ontario don't like being called rural, but you know what—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Those last ones usually get you in trouble.

Minister.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, 330,000 families in the rural, remote or northern parts of our province will be getting the benefit of 20% on their bills. We've been saying this all along. Even the Financial Accountability Officer has come out with a report that says we recognize that some families in these parts of our province are seeing higher costs on their electricity bill on the delivery charge. That percentage goes directly toward lowering that piece.

But the Financial Accountability Officer also said that, on average, we're right in the middle of the pack when it comes to our rates right across this country.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question today is for the Minister of Education. We have a lot to be proud of when it comes to student achievement, thanks in large part to our great educators and staff. Our schools are recognized across the country and around the world for excellence in education, and this is something that we need to be extremely proud of.

Last week, I understand, you announced how we are working together with our schools to implement our new renewed math strategy. I know that the latest EQAO results show that there is more work for us to do to support our students and our teachers in mathematics learning.

Speaker, through you to the minister, what is the Ontario government doing to raise student achievement in mathematics?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to say thank you to the very hard-working member from Kingston and the Islands. I know that she is a wonderful advocate for her constituents.

Supporting effective learning and teaching in mathematics is a top priority for our government. I am very proud that we are dedicating more than \$60 million to supporting students across the province as they strive to do well in mathematics. This strategy is in place as of September.

Math is critical to the jobs of today and to the jobs of the future. Our renewed math strategy is informed by research and best practices in learning. We have consulted with educators from across the sector. It focuses on the needs of students, educators and parents while encouraging a shared responsibility to support our students in their learning.

By working together with our students, we can ensure their success.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: We are extremely proud of the investments made in education. It is important that we continue to focus on improving the achievement of all students in mathematics.

I'm pleased to hear that the students in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, and boards like the Limestone District School Board, the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board et celui des écoles pub-

liques francophones will have access to increased support when it comes to mathematics.

Minister, can you please tell this House what types of supports and opportunities our government will be providing as part of the renewed math strategy?

1110

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you again to the member.

Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the school year, we have introduced key elements of the renewed math strategy: a minimum of 60 minutes each day of protected time for learning effective math instruction; assessment for students in grades 1 to 8; and up to three math leads in all elementary schools. We're also ensuring that resources are in place for students and parents: better access to online math resources and math supports such as Homework Help and SOS Devoirs, as well as a parent tool kit and opportunities for educators to deepen their knowledge in math learning, teaching and leading.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of our education workers for the great work they're doing on behalf of our students.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Finance. In his recent annual report, the Financial Accountability Officer confirmed what we already knew: This government is neither open nor transparent. The FAO said that they are actively skirting their obligations and refusing to disclose information obligated under the law. He has even said, "I believe this is political direction."

Through the work of the FAO, we have learned a number of shocking revelations. The sale of Hydro One will have a negative impact on the province's finances. Business investment is set to decline, and Ontario's debt level is spiralling out of control. Yet they refuse to cooperate with the FAO and obey the law. I ask the minister: What are you hiding from the Ontario taxpayers?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we're working very closely with the FAO. We recognize the importance of getting our information out. The C.D. Howe Institute and many others have already expressed that Ontario's books and accounting are by far the most transparent and most indicative of what is the state of affairs, unlike what would happen in the past or in the Conservative regime, where they hid \$5 billion at the time of their last election. We have been surpassing our targets. We have constantly decreased our deficits year over year. Rating agencies and investors value Ontario. Even the FAO has recognized that we are coming to balance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: Here are some examples of what the FAO has called a "broader pattern" of secrecy and refusal to provide legally required information. This government has failed to release the long-range assessment of Ontario's finances which was due us on the June 12 deadline. They have failed to provide third-quarter financial statements since 2012.

These are important documents for MPPs to do our jobs, and they're required under the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. So much for being open and transparent. This government has plunged Ontario into structural deficits and record levels of debt, yet they refuse to come clean and obey the law.

I ask the minister again: What else are you hiding from the people of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The long-term report is coming out, as it did four years ago. It actually did come out at a later time. We want to make certain all the information is obtained, including some of our more recent reports that we are in the midst of having completed.

Furthermore, the FAO recognizes credit agencies' assessments that we are well positioned to achieve our balanced target, stating that credit agencies' "affirmation of Ontario's credit rating ... indicates that they believe the province has taken adequate steps on both revenues and expenditures to achieve its plan to restore ... balance." The credibility of our plan was affirmed recently by four credit rating agencies, including Moody's upgrading of their outlook of Ontario's credit. The FAO, the accountants—they're all working on the matter. We are eager to release our public accounts because we have a great story to tell, a story that included no support from the opposition to reduce our deficit and increase our—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It was due June 12.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's never too late. The member from Nipissing is warned.
New question.

ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The government insists that the Ontario Energy Board will defend ratepayers when a privatized Hydro One comes calling to demand more private profits. But the Auditor General found that the OEB approved rate increases for capital upgrades that never took place. Hydro One spent the money on something else. Then, as the number of blackouts increased, Hydro One came back to demand even more ratepayer cash to fix the problems that they should have fixed with the money they have already been given.

What are the consequences for a utility that receives ratepayer cash for upgrades that never take place or for the regulator that approves those rate increases?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm thankful to be able to stand and clarify a lot of things that were in that question. Hydro One does not reflect investments in rates until those assets are in service. To make that clear: Customers do not pay for deferred investments. The OEB is very clear on that. The OEB, as we've said all along, is the organization that sets the rates. They look at what is being brought forward, and then they make that decision. At no time has any decision been made to defer investments.

What I can tell you is that the hard work of this utility is part of what has transformed an unreliable and under-maintained system that was left in place by the PCs. We've turned that into the clean and reliable system that we have today, and that's something we can all be proud of.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, it's clear that the government hasn't read the Auditor General's report on Hydro One.

The Ontario Energy Board approved higher delivery rates to pay for a fivefold increase in capital spending by Toronto Hydro, but upgrades that were supposed to take place years ago were delayed or deferred.

Even though the OEB gave them ratepayer money for capital upgrades, the CEO of Toronto Hydro and the mayor of Toronto are now claiming that there's no other way to pay for capital upgrades and to prevent blackouts except through privatization. The Premier is encouraging this privatization by offering a fat tax break that will transfer the debt burden onto Ontarians.

Instead of subsidizing the privatization of Toronto Hydro, why won't the Premier make sure that when the OEB approves rate increases for capital upgrades, those upgrades actually take place?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Again, when it comes to the privatizing of Toronto Hydro, that's a decision for Toronto city council.

When it comes to the OEB, the agency has a strong record of reviewing rate applications with the consumer in mind. For example, in 2010, Hydro One asked for a rate increase for its distribution and received a 9% reduction in its capital requests. In 2012, Hydro One asked for a rate increase for its transmission and received a 3% reduction of its capital request.

Priority when it comes to replacing transformers is decided by their condition and performance. How critical the asset is to the electricity service is one of the factors that they look at what they're making that decision as a company. Once again, there is nothing there to reflect that investments in rates will increase for assets that are in service. Customers do not pay for deferred investments.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. Minister, Ontarians know that investing in infrastructure that creates jobs, stimulates growth and enhances the quality of life is a top priority for our government. Our historic \$160-billion investment has already started building bridges, roads, schools, hospitals and other critical public infrastructure projects in my riding and across the province. This investment will also fund often forgotten but equally important green infra-

structure projects, such as clean water and waste water infrastructure. Across Ontario, there's a growing need for all levels of government to make strategic investments in clean water and effective water management systems.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he please explain to this House the investment our government is making in clean water and waste water infrastructure?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'd like to thank the member from the great riding of Northumberland—Quinte West.

The people of Ontario deserve to know that they have clean water and effective water management systems that they can trust each and every day. That is why our government is partnering with the federal government to make significant investments in clean water and waste water infrastructure across the province.

The federal and provincial governments, along with Ontario municipalities, are investing \$1.1 billion in the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund, which will provide access to clean and reliable drinking water, efficient wastewater systems and healthy waterways—\$270 million will be provided by our government and Ontario's municipalities each.

1120

We are honouring our commitment to build Ontario up by investing in critical public infrastructure that creates jobs, stimulates growth and enhances quality of life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister. I'm delighted to know that our government is making significant investments into the protection of municipal water supply. It is encouraging to know that our government is working to ensure constituents, like mine from Port Hope to Quinte West, have safe, reliable public infrastructure that they can count on.

I know that our government's multi-billion-dollar investment in infrastructure will create jobs, stimulate growth and enhance quality of life for all Ontarians, sustaining an average of 110,000 jobs per year. I also know that our government offers many infrastructure funding programs for everything from small community projects to major public transit works.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he please elaborate on our government's historic infrastructure program?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Some 41 projects have already been approved under the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund, and applications from all municipalities and First Nations across the province are now being accepted.

But the fund is only one part of our province's historic \$160-billion investment in critical public infrastructure. The constituency of every single member in this House will receive support for infrastructure projects through various funds. We have committed to boosting the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund from \$100 million to \$300 million per year. We are spending \$31 billion on moving Ontario forward, \$15 billion of which will be spent outside the GTHA in many of the ridings of the members opposite. We have also committed \$1 billion to

the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario, and billions more in education and health care capital and retrofits.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Premier. Premier, when the ORPP was abandoned, the government said it would cost around \$20 million. Then it was revealed that the true cost was more than \$70 million, including generous severances for Liberal friends, some of whom had only worked on the ORPP for days.

But that report also revealed an unaccounted \$12 million in office space. First it was \$20 million, then \$70 million and now \$82 million. Will the Premier tell us the true cost of cancelling the ORPP, or are you hiding that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Finance will want to comment in the supplementary, but let me just say that it is a very good thing that across this country, we now have agreement on Canada Pension Plan enhancement.

The fact is that we were moving ahead to put in place an Ontario retirement pension plan, because under the Stephen Harper government—and I know that the Leader of the Opposition knows all about that—there was no understanding of the pension crisis that was facing people across the country.

So now that we have been able to work with the federal government and work with our colleagues across the country, we have a Canada Pension Plan enhancement. But we were very determined in Ontario to make sure that, in the absence of that agreement at the federal level and across the country, we would have secure retirement for people in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Again to the Premier: If the Premier had just listened to my call to put an end to the ORPP, while on hold after the federal election—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Durham is warned.

Finish, please.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you. Instead, the Liberals recklessly plowed ahead. The \$82 million doesn't count staff resources, or the \$7 million spent every year on pension policy development. The Premier should come clean and tell us the true cost of cancelling the ORPP.

I want to ask another part of a question here: Do Ontario taxpayers regularly pay for cross-country advertising?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: There are a couple of things that the member references which are completely incorrect, but the most important one is the fact that if we had listened to them and listened to her, there would be no retirement security for the people of Ontario or the people of Canada. There would be no CPP. We stood in this House and we fought for the people of Ontario and all of Canada. I'm very proud of the work this Premier has done to support that cause.

Furthermore, we put forward what we anticipate will be the high point of any outstanding costs, and those costs are actually coming down, so again, she's incorrect on that point.

Furthermore, this is a nationally effective situation that is benefiting all of Canada, and that is what this member doesn't recognize. We are working for all of Canada as well as Ontario, and they are going to benefit from the decisions that all of us are making collectively.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. A couple of people in different seats, again, who I may have to come back to, who continue to do those things that they're not supposed to do.

New question.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Some 900,000 people depend on Ontario Works and ODSP to live. Since 1995, the price of a loaf of bread or a dozen eggs has more than doubled, and rent and hydro have gone through the roof. In that time, social assistance for a single person has gone up just \$18. That's barely 2% in 21 years. Families can't make ends meet. Kids are going hungry. Your announcement today won't even dent the years of neglect.

Why has this government not used its 13 years in power to substantially increase efforts for people and the money they need to survive?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the minister responsible for poverty reduction will want to comment in the supplementary. But I want to say to the member opposite that I completely support in principle the bill that he's brought forward. We have already taken action to put more money in the hands of people who are vulnerable in this province. The fact is, the group that was most at risk, single people without children, now receive \$100 per month more than they did in 2012; that's \$1,200 a year more than they received. We've increased by \$25 a month for single adults receiving Ontario Works, 1.5% for families receiving Ontario Works, and 1.5% for individuals with disabilities who receive ODSP.

On top of that is the Ontario Child Benefit, and we are working on rent supplements. We understand that there are myriad things we need to do to support people who are living in poverty.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you to the Premier for the compliment. However, even with your increase, people are still \$11,500 below the poverty level. This government is failing the most vulnerable people in Ontario. People expected more from the Premier and her government. This government simply does not understand the cost of living in our province.

New Democrats believe the government should make policy based on evidence and research. We need hard evidence on the real cost of living to ensure that social assistance benefits meet their basic needs.

In April, all three parties voted to support the establishment of a social assistance research commission, which we appreciate. But we don't want it to die in committee. We want it to go through committee—be called to committee, go for third reading and be law in this province.

Will the Premier and her caucus support the social assistance research commission again this afternoon, as they did unanimously five months ago, and ensure that the committee calls—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for poverty reduction.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to respond to the question from the member opposite. I wish I had more time to go over an exceptionally lengthy list of all the positive accomplishments this government has accomplished in the past three years. I just want to touch on a couple.

The Income Security Reform Working Group is developing that road map that focuses on needs and prioritizes actions for the most meaningful impact.

1130

I just want to touch on a couple of things that are happening. For example, we've removed the provincial clawback on child support payments to families receiving social assistance, increasing the annual income of almost 19,000 families by an average of \$282 per month. That's \$3,300 annually. Most of these are single-income families. This government is dedicated to working with the most vulnerable members of our society and making sure they reach their potential.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is to the President of the Treasury Board Secretariat. Minister, it's well known to every member of this House that the Treasury Board Secretariat acts as an important control function for the government, that the Treasury Board is responsible for ensuring that we maximize—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Sorry, continue the clock. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is warned.

Carry on.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Treasury Board is responsible for ensuring that we maximize the value of every dollar that we spend. In addition to controlling costs, your ministry is proactively working to modernize government and find efficiencies. The minister is leading our government in streamlining transfer payments to the organizations that deliver services and implementing more effective ways of delivering information and information technology solutions to Ontarians.

As part of modernizing government, I know that Treasury Board supports ministries by adding a behav-

journal science lens to policy development and program implementation. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, will she inform the House how the Treasury Board supports ministries through the behavioural insights unit?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for her excellent question. Ontario is one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to leverage behavioural sciences to improve outcomes and deliver better services to Ontarians. A really good example of this is organ donor registration.

We know the majority of Ontarians say they're willing to register as an organ and tissue donor, yet only 27% are registered. The greater Toronto area has one of the lowest rates in the province, with only 17% registering. Using behavioural insights, Treasury Board works closely with the Ministry of Health to improve the registration process, making it easier and faster for donors to register while making it cost-effective to the Ministry of Health. With this new process, we saw registration rates increase up to 143%—great news.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you to the minister for the response. I know the Treasury Board is often characterized by the financial function it performs for the rest of the government. It is great to hear how Treasury Board is assisting ministries in creating more efficient processes and delivering positive outcomes.

In my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, I encourage my constituents to become registered organ and tissue donors. I also work closely with Mohan, Tom and Helen—I know they're watching today—at the Scarborough Gift of Life Association to promote organ and tissue donation in our diverse community.

It is shocking for me to hear that only 17% of GTA residents have registered as organ donors. I'm very pleased to hear that the Treasury Board is a part of the solution.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can the minister inform the House what other accomplishments the behavioural insights unit of the Treasury Board has achieved to date?

Hon. Liz Sandals: The Treasury Board created the behavioural insights unit in 2013, and we have numerous examples. For example, Treasury Board worked closely with the Ministry of Transportation to modify the information sent to Ontarians encouraging them to renew their licence plate stickers, something people don't like doing all that much. They can do it online. During an eight-week pilot, we saw more than 13,000 licence plate renewals online with the help of the behavioural science unit. That resulted in savings of \$28,000 because—

Interruption.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think that's mine—because of that.

In a short period of time, we saw large savings simply by shifting user behaviour. With the help of the behavioural insights unit, we look forward to more of these—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Premier. In 2010, Jim McEwen, a Durham region resident, suffered a stroke at the age of 55. Like many post-stroke patients, Mr. McEwen has required hundreds of physiotherapy treatments to regain mobility and improve his quality of life. However, when Mr. McEwen needed our health care system the most, he was afforded only a dozen treatments and then was forgotten about. In fact, the OHIP model for physiotherapy greatly limits the coverage of those between the ages of 20 and 64. As a result, post-stroke patients in this age range struggle for access to rehabilitation services they need and deserve.

Premier, will you take steps to ensure that all post-stroke patients, regardless of age, have access to sufficient rehabilitation services?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for seniors affairs.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to begin by thanking the member opposite for the question and his advocacy. I want to reassure him that, indeed, patients under the age of 65 who are recovering from a stroke are eligible for OHIP-covered restorative services. Our government is committed to providing quality care to all stroke patients, and as part of the Patients First action plan, we're already taking steps to improve the quality of care provided to Ontarians for post-stroke care.

Let me give you some examples. In Ontario, publicly funded physiotherapy and other rehabilitation services, regardless of the age of the patient, is available for anybody who is recovering from post-acute stroke and is offered in five settings: hospitals, hospital outpatient clinics, in-home care, long-term-care homes and community physio clinics.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Back to the Premier: There's a large body of evidence indicating that with consistent rehabilitation, post-stroke patients can show dramatic improvements to their health. We need to recognize that there's a great need for comprehensive and integrated post-stroke management.

Premier, this afternoon I'm bringing forward a private member's bill for second reading, asking to end age discrimination for post-stroke recovery patients. Will you commit, Premier, to supporting that bill?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Again, I thank the member opposite for his advocacy. I also thank him for introducing his private member's bill. I look forward to the debate on this bill, as I know does the Minister of Health. We look forward to hearing all of the arguments. We look forward to hearing the Legislature discuss the bill and let it go through its due course.

But in the meantime, I want to reiterate that this government already has programs in place to help post-stroke recovery patients, regardless of their age. We're already doing that, and we always look forward to doing more.

Mr. Speaker, all I wanted to say is I know that the Minister of Health, when he is back, will also want to

weigh in on this. I want to assure this Legislature of our commitment to helping patients recovering from strokes with all of the services they absolutely need and deserve. That is what our universal health care is all about.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Seniors in London have been waiting months on end for complex continuing care beds. More than two years ago, there was a plan to add 11 beds in London, but it never happened. This Liberal government has made no new funding commitment to complex continuing care, which leaves Londoners unable to access the care they need.

Speaker, we are at a tipping point in my community. Without some big changes soon, London hospitals will not be able to meet the growing needs of Londoners. Instead of cutting hospital budgets, when will the Premier support the new complex continuing care beds that our hospitals and our patients need?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for seniors affairs.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I used to be, as you know, the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care responsible for long-term care, so I just want to assure this House that our government has been making record investments in long-term care. As minister responsible for seniors, I will continue to advocate on behalf of seniors, but I do want to remind this Legislature that we have increased funding for long-term care at record levels.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to welcome a Scarborough resident who's here for MS lobby day, Barbara Dickson, who's also the author of *Bomb Girls*. Welcome to Queen's Park, Barbara.

DEFERRED VOTES

ONTARIO REBATE FOR ELECTRICITY CONSUMERS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA REMISE DE L'ONTARIO POUR LES CONSOMMATEURS D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act in respect of the cost of electricity /
Projet de loi 13, Loi concernant le coût de l'électricité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members please take your seats.

On September 21, 2016, Mr. Thibeault moved second reading of Bill 13, An Act in respect of the cost of electricity. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	French, Jennifer K.	Murray, Glen R.
Anderson, Granville	Gates, Wayne	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Naqvi, Yasir
Arnott, Ted	Gravelle, Michael	Natyshak, Taras
Bailey, Robert	Gretzky, Lisa	Nicholls, Rick
Baker, Yvan	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettapiece, Randy
Ballard, Chris	Hatfield, Percy	Potts, Arthur
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hillier, Randy	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Hoggarth, Ann	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Patrick	Hunter, Mitzi	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Sattler, Peggy
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung	Leal, Jeff	Singh, Jagmeet
Joon	MacCharles, Tracy	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Coe, Lorne	Mangat, Amrit	Tabuns, Peter
Colle, Mike	Mantha, Michael	Takhar, Harinder S.
Coteau, Michael	Martins, Cristina	Taylor, Monique
Crack, Grant	Martow, Gila	Thibeault, Glenn
Damerla, Dipika	Matthews, Deborah	Thompson, Lisa M.
Del Duca, Steven	McDonnell, Jim	Vanthof, John
Delaney, Bob	McGarry, Kathryn	Vernile, Daiene
Dhillon, Vic	McMahon, Eleanor	Walker, Bill
Dickson, Joe	Milczyn, Peter Z.	Wong, Soo
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Norm	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	Miller, Paul	Yakubski, John
Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza	Yurek, Jeff
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Munro, Julia	Zimmer, David
Fraser, John		

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 84; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated September 28, 2016, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

Point of order: the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I just want to remind all the members that there's a very important reception by the MS Society. Everybody is welcome. Bring your carnation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm very pleased to welcome some very special guests who are with us today. I ask members to please welcome Rachel Epstein, Joanna Radbord, Kelly Jordan, Andy Inkster, Raquel Grand, Deanna Djos, Dr. Donna McDonagh, John Caffery, Ian MacPherson, Ashley McGhee, Barbara Besharat,

Matthew Pearson, Emery Potter, Kirsti Mathers McHenry and Jennifer Mathers McHenry, along with members of my staff Susan Kushneryk and Clare Graham.

Most importantly, Speaker, we have two babies in the House, as well. I want to welcome Ollie Besharat McGhee and Goldie Gruson-Potter, who are with us.

I want to thank all our guests who are here for their assistance in the drafting of the All Families Are Equal Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know the babies won't heckle.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPICE CARE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: As a community, we believe in extending compassion to those who most need it. That's why end-of-life care for all ages and stages is essential. That's why we have seen a groundswell of support for a new residential hospice in Perth county, and that's why I strongly support the efforts of the Stratford/Perth residential hospice committee. Since 2013, they have been working tirelessly. They have been working to pursue the approvals and funding they need from the South West LHIN. They've done their homework. They have engaged partners in and across Perth county and then in Huron county.

In recent months, I met several times with committee members Andy Werner and Anne Fontana. The community is fortunate to have their leadership on a project this important.

Many times I've expressed public support for this project, and recently I wrote directly to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and reminded him that the government has already committed \$75 million in funding for hospices and end-of-life care. I also noted that his government recently committed to fund new palliative care beds in other communities. But now we need him to come through for our community. We need him to include Perth county in the first round of funding for the new hospice beds for underserved areas. If he does that, we'll be the first to applaud. It's time to move on this project.

MASON MACRI

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Today, I want to take a moment to remind everyone that September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

While we have made much progress when it comes to fighting childhood cancer, we still have far too many families having to wage courageous battles against this horrible disease. Sadly, too many parents have to lay their children to rest in the province of Ontario.

Unfortunately, cancer remains the number one disease-related cause of death among children ages 0 to 14 in Canada.

Over the last year, my hometown of Belle River was touched and inspired by another little superhero. Mason Macri was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. Mason was a huge fan of superheroes, and a wonderful photo of Mason in his Batman shirt and cape was featured in local media. His bravery and his fight against cancer inspired people across our community and indeed across our country. Mason was even honoured by Don Cherry and Ron MacLean on Hockey Night in Canada.

Sadly, this past June, Mason passed. The legacy he leaves us is one that inspires us all to keep up the fight in his name and in the name of so many young people who have taught us what true bravery really means.

Mason Macri received a superhero send-off back home, as many people in our community lined the streets dressed as superheroes to say a final goodbye. The Canadian Forces Snowbirds did a flyover to honour Mason.

I stand here today to do my part to honour him, as well as to remind us all that the fight continues and to pledge that we won't give up until every child has the ability to say that they have beaten cancer.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm here today to pay tribute to all the incredible volunteers who belong to the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada. They're here today, and that's why we're all wearing red carnations.

Sadly, in Canada we have the highest rate of MS in the world. Over 100,000 Canadians are afflicted with MS, and in Ontario there are about 37,000 people who are living with this disease.

I encourage my fellow members and citizens across Ontario to advocate for income and employment support systems which will ensure that those affected by MS will get the help they need as soon as they need it. Quality and coordinated health care is also an integral part in ensuring that those living with MS and their loved ones can continue to live healthy, independent and fulfilling lives.

Today, we have joined the fight here in the Legislature but, as you know, Mr. Speaker, in all of our communities there are friends, relatives and neighbours who are fighting MS. The good news is that there are so many fantastic volunteers who are helping to raise money and help those with MS. I salute everyone involved in fighting MS.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Ted Arnott: On September 12, the very first day the House resumed following the government's decision to prorogue the Legislature, I tabled six resolutions. One of my resolutions—in fact, it's the very first item on the Legislature's order paper—calls on the Minister of Transportation to prioritize the Highway 7 Acton bypass project by placing it on the ministry's five-year plan for new highway construction.

The mayor of the town of Halton Hills, Rick Bonnette, town council and staff have asked the minister to partner with the town on a study to investigate alternatives for a long-term transportation solution for truck traffic along Highway 7 within the town of Halton Hills. This would include reviewing the idea for an Acton bypass. I agree; it's a good idea. Working together, we have said that a bypass is needed in order to find a long-term solution to the problem of truck traffic along Highway 7. There are also local concerns about truck traffic through Georgetown and Norval which need to be studied and addressed.

I've raised this issue in the Legislature several times. I've also written to the Minister of Transportation many times and talked to him directly. Last January, I initiated and helped to arrange a meeting with the minister, Mayor Bonnette, Regional Chair Gary Carr and town staff in the boardroom of the minister's Queen's Park office. The minister led us to believe he would try to help. On June 8, he indicated in writing that ministry staff would assist with the terms of reference of the study. Now the ministry needs to become our financial partner as well.

The region of Halton is only continuing to grow, and this problem will continue to get worse, unless we get together to find a long-term solution. Let's get going.

ABE OUDSHOORN

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today to honour London West constituent and Western University nursing professor Abe Oudshoorn, this year's recipient of the Western Humanitarian Award. This \$5,000 annual award recognizes Western faculty, staff and students who are working to improve quality of life for people in communities around the world, with the funds directed to the support of humanitarian efforts.

As the 2016 recipient, Abe is donating his \$5,000 award to the local agency All Our Sisters, to help bring women with lived experience of homelessness to the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness conference, which is being held in London this November.

I offer my profound thanks and congratulations to Western, Abe Oudshoorn and All Our Sisters. First, to Western University for having the foresight and the vision to harness the passion for change and the dedication of faculty staff and students to building a fairer, more just society.

Second, to Abe for his leadership as chair of the London Homeless Coalition and for his unwavering commitment to putting knowledge into action. He is an inspiration to his students and to Londoners, showing what can be achieved when communities come together to tackle the complex health and social challenges of our time.

Finally, to All Our Sisters for empowering women who have survived homelessness to become part of the solution and to share knowledge, expertise and ideas that will help others out of marginalization and into stable housing.

You are all heroes, and we salute you all.

ANTONIO SOUSA

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise today to pay tribute to Antonio Sousa, a true Portuguese pioneer and role model to all Portuguese Canadians.

1310

As the MPP for the riding of Davenport, the riding with the largest population of Portuguese Canadians in Ontario and perhaps in Canada, and as a proud member of the Portuguese community, I was fortunate to have known Mr. Sousa and to have seen his dedication to his community and to the community that welcomed him and his family.

Antonio Sousa was a pioneer in the truest sense of the word. In 1953, Antonio left the oppressive regime in Portugal to start a new life in Canada and was one of the first Portuguese to immigrate to Canada. A year later, his wife, Maria Antonia, and their son Julio were reunited with him in Toronto. Their son Charles, the Ontario Minister of Finance, was born a few years later.

In Toronto, Antonio founded a restaurant and a boarding house in Kensington Market, where he became the heart of the community. He worked tirelessly, helping others who immigrated to Canada to start a new life in their new country by providing them with shelter, warm meals and a network to find employment. His early involvement in the community and his work with newcomers paved the way for the Portuguese community today. A passionate member of his community, Antonio Sousa co-founded the First Portuguese Canadian Cultural Centre, now in my riding of Davenport, and the Rancho Folclórico da Nazaré. He was a big supporter of many other Luso Canadian associations.

Sadly, a month ago today, on August 29, 2016, Antonio Sousa passed away peacefully. At the beautiful service to celebrate his life, Minister Sousa mentioned that on his father's 50th anniversary in Canada, when asked what advice he had for the growing Portuguese community, Antonio stated, "... something I learned in life and always tried to convey, in my own way to many people, but especially to my children and now my grandchildren. Always do your best and always try to give generously to others that which you would like to receive."

We are all truly grateful for Antonio's generosity, hard work and dedication to his community. He will surely be missed. I know that his work and his legacy will live across the province as a true Portuguese pioneer.

Obrigada Sr. Sousa. Valeu a pena.

ROSH HASHANAH

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very happy that I have the students here from Netivot HaTorah Day School in Thornhill so that I can speak about Rosh Hashanah.

Not everybody here knows exactly what Rosh Hashanah is all about, so I'm going to start off by saying that this year in the Jewish calendar it is the year 5,776 since the Jewish community began counting the years.

Now, “Rosh Hashanah” literally means “head of the year,” so it’s sort of like the Jewish New Year. That’s how people commonly refer to it, but it’s not celebrated like New Year’s Eve at all. New Year’s Eve is kind of a silly and fun celebration; the Jewish community is going to be celebrating in synagogue. It’s a day of reflection and of prayer. The shofar, which is from a ram’s horn and sort of sounds like a trumpet, is blown 100 times each day as long as it’s not also the Sabbath.

But it is a little bit like New Year’s Eve. In fact, we do have kind of a similar idea of resolutions, which means that you think back on the past year and you think to the future and about how you can make things better and how you can maybe make up for your mistakes. I think it’s a great time for people—if they have what we call in the Jewish community “broyges,” meaning that you’re not talking to somebody, it’s a great time to shake their hand and make up and focus on doing better for the coming year.

So I am going to say L’Shanah tovah tikatevi v’taihatemi, which means, “May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year.”

L’Shanah Tovah, everybody who is celebrating.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Paul Miller: Two weeks ago, I met with several Hamiltonians from the \$15 and Fairness campaign. The campaign is asking for employment and labour law changes to better protect workers, particularly those in precarious employment.

The nature of work is changing. The labour market is evolving, and employment is being transformed. But for too many people, it is not a change for the better. People are working more than full-time hours in two or more part-time jobs and are trapped in a constant struggle, always waiting to be called for a shift, waiting for the next day’s schedule, unable to build a better future for their kids, unable to even think about retirement. And more often than not, they are working for minimum wage, which entrenches them in poverty instead of giving the chance to provide for their families and themselves.

On Saturday, the minimum wage in Ontario increased by 15 cents. Speaker, that’s a small step to keep up with inflation, but it is not enough to make a real difference to the lives of workers on minimum wage. It’s time for Ontario to make sure that no one working full-time is stuck living below the poverty level. Fifteen cents an hour won’t cut it. It’s time for a \$15 minimum wage in Ontario.

Thank you to the \$15 and Fairness campaigners for your advocacy. The NDP caucus supports your call for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage.

SILVER CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Yvan Baker: The TDSB has been considering for some time the sale of Silver Creek school in my community, in Etobicoke Centre. This is very concerning, as Silver Creek is leased to two organizations, the Etobicoke

Children’s Centre and Silver Creek Pre-School, both of which provide services to children with special needs. The property also includes green space that is important to our community.

As MPP for Etobicoke Centre, I have done everything I can to protect these critical services for our most vulnerable children and to protect the surrounding green space, and have been working with members of our community like the Friends of Silver Creek, Etobicoke Children’s Centre and Silver Creek Pre-School. I have spoken in our community, in this Legislature, and met with several ministers of our government and TDSB representatives to advocate for the protection of these services. Most importantly, I have been working with our ministers and staff to ensure that the provincial government does everything possible.

This has led to a number of important steps. First, in the spring the government of Ontario wrote to the TDSB to express initial interest in the property. Shortly afterwards the province committed to the protection of the services in the community, and shortly after that the province launched discussions with the TDSB on the future ownership of the property.

Our community and I have also advocated with city officials to protect the green space. Unfortunately, the city indicated recently that it won’t be investing to protect the green space. I didn’t give up my advocacy there, Mr. Speaker, and two weeks ago, at Silver Creek Pre-School, I was pleased to announce that my efforts have led to the government of Ontario deciding to focus only on whole-site solutions. In other words, the province will not be considering solutions that involve severing the property or the green space, which is excellent news for our community.

I rise today to thank my community for their passion and dedication to this cause and assure them that I will continue to do everything I can to protect Silver Creek and these essential services in our community of Etobicoke Centre.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ALL FAMILIES ARE EQUAL ACT
(PARENTAGE AND RELATED
REGISTRATIONS STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT), 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR L’ÉGALITÉ
DE TOUTES LES FAMILLES
(MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI
CONCERNE LA FILIATION ET LES
ENREGISTREMENTS CONNEXES)

Mr. Naqvi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act, the Vital Statistics Act and various other Acts

respecting parentage and related registrations / Projet de loi 28, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil et diverses autres lois en ce qui concerne la filiation et les enregistrements connexes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I am very honoured today to introduce the All Families Are Equal Act, which would update Ontario's parentage laws to ensure that all kids and all families are treated equally in our province. The best thing for a child is for there to be no uncertainty about who their parents are. This bill seeks to end the legal uncertainty faced by Ontario parents who conceive their children using assisted reproduction.

If passed, the bill would ensure that the legal status of parents is recognized clearly and equitably, whether they are LGBTQ2+ or straight and whether their children were conceived with or without assistance. Importantly, Speaker, this bill recognizes that in the year 2016 family structures are diverse and that there is no one way to start a family.

I also want to thank the MPP for Parkdale–High Park for her advocacy on this very important issue of human rights.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While I appreciate good news and support from all sides of the House, I have to remind our audiences that there is no participation in the activities: applauding or holding flags or doing anything. I will accept—

Mr. Mike Colle: It was the babies.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't heckle the Speaker. I will accept the coos of babies. Thank you.

1320

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (HELMET EXEMPTION FOR SIKH MOTORCYCLISTS), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (EXEMPTION DE L'OBLIGATION DE PORT DU CASQUE POUR LES MOTOCYCLISTES SIKHS)

Mr. Singh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 29, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to exempt Sikh motorcyclists from the requirement to wear a helmet / Projet de loi 29, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour exempter les motocyclistes sikhs de l'obligation de porter un casque.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This bill would bring Ontario in line with other provinces like Manitoba and BC, where the exemption exists, as well as the UK, where it exists for the entire United Kingdom.

Section 104 of the Highway Traffic Act requires persons riding or operating a motorcycle or a motor-assisted bicycle on a highway to wear a helmet. The bill exempts members of the Sikh religion who have unshorn hair and who habitually wear turbans from the section 104 requirement to wear a helmet.

HUMAN RIGHTS CODE AMENDMENT ACT (GENETIC CHARACTERISTICS), 2016 LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LE CODE DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE (CARACTÉRISTIQUES GÉNÉTIQUES)

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to genetic characteristics / Projet de loi 30, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui a trait aux caractéristiques génétiques.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carried? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for short statement.

Mr. Mike Colle: The bill, if passed, would amend the Human Rights Code of Ontario to include genetic discrimination as a prohibited ground of discrimination. The act currently includes race, marital status and disability, among other things.

In addition to other amendments, various sections are amended to provide that every person has a right to equal treatment without discrimination because of genetic characteristics with respect to services, goods, facilities, occupancy of accommodation, the right to contract and employment, and membership in various types of organizations.

This ensures that people will not be discriminated against when seeking a job because of who their parents were, or when seeking insurance and being denied insurance because of who their parents were.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a number of petitions with regard to electricity rates. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current government took office;

"Whereas over half of Ontarians' power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment;

"Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss;

"Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the government's lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount; and

"Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

"Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills; and

"Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians' electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills."

I support this petition, I have signed it and will give it to Om.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mr. Réjean Berthiaume and the thousands of other people from Sudbury and Nickel Belt who signed the petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Brendan to bring it to the Clerk.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here anticipating a conversion on the road to Damascus.

"Supporting the Implementation of a Cap-and-Trade System in Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing mankind;

"Whereas climate change is already hurting Ontario's environment and economy, causing extreme weather like floods and droughts, and increasing the cost of food and insurance;

"Whereas right now, polluters are allowed to emit greenhouse gases into our environment for free;

"Whereas good environmental policy is good economic policy and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels will create jobs now and form a central pillar of our prosperity in the coming years;

"Whereas Ontario has demonstrated leadership in tackling greenhouse gas emissions by banning coal-fired plants;

"Whereas Ontarians have been consulted on the path forward for pricing carbon and other greenhouse gases;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize that we have a responsibility to take action now, and support a cap-and-trade system for Ontario as the most effective method for significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

I fully support this petition and leave it with Jesse.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

"Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can't afford to pay more;

"Whereas Ontario's businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

"Whereas the recent Auditor General's report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

"Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven't met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

"Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government's current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills."

Madam Speaker, I've been presenting this petition since February. I will continue to do so as they come in. I've affixed my signature as well.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The title of this petition is "Ontario is not for sale."

"Whereas the Liberal government of Ontario is currently reviewing proposals to sell off a significant amount of our shared public assets such as Ontario Power Generation (OPG), Hydro One, and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO); and

"Whereas our shared public assets provide more affordable hydro, develop environmentally friendly energy, create thousands of good Ontario jobs, and are accountable to all Ontarians; and

"Whereas our shared public assets put money in the public bank account so we can invest in hospitals, roads and schools; and

1330

"Whereas this Liberal government is more interested in helping out wealthy shareholders and investors than they are in the hard-working Ontarians who are building this province; and

"Whereas Ontario is stronger when there is shared prosperity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Stop the selling-off of our shared public assets. Keep our public assets in public hands."

I agree with this. I'm going to affix my signature and give it to Paul to be delivered to the table.

ICE MACHINES

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I have a petition addressed to the Legislature Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas ice machines are found everywhere throughout the health care system, including long-term-care facilities and hospitals; and

"Whereas numerous bacteria and viruses are known to contaminate ice cubes, including cholera, typhoid fever,

salmonella, legionella, E. coli, shigella, hepatitis A and norovirus; and

"Whereas the lack of regulation increases the probability of consuming ice from ice machines with unhygienic levels of bacteria and/or viruses, putting public safety at risk; and

"Whereas individuals consuming ice from a contaminated ice machine in a hospital or long-term-care facility are at a greater risk due to potentially weakened immune systems; and

"Whereas the inherent risk and rate at which both bacteria and biofilm grow inside ice machines have caused other countries to mandate the cleaning of ice machines; and

"Whereas there are currently no mandates or guidelines on the frequency or thoroughness of cleaning for institutional ice machines in hospitals, long-term-care or other health care facilities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario establish and enforce cleaning and hygiene standards for all institutional ice machines in provincially funded and/or operated facilities."

I support this petition, affix my signature to it and hand it to page Adam.

NATURAL GAS

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas currently 76% of homes in Ontario use natural gas for heat, as it is a clean, reliable and affordable fuel source; and

"Whereas under Premier Wynne's new plan, all homes and buildings built after 2030 will be barred from using natural gas and plans to expand to all buildings in Ontario before 2050; and

"Whereas making the switch from natural gas heat to electric heat will cost an average of \$3,000 extra per home as well as homeowners being faced with \$4,500 in renovation costs; and

"Whereas at a time when both people and businesses are already suffering from paying sky-high hydro bills, they cannot afford these unnecessary changes to ban natural gas heat from Ontario buildings;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reconsider the plan to ban natural gas heat from Ontario buildings and new construction."

I agree and will sign it and send it to the table with Sarah.

DISASTER RELIEF

M^{me} France G  linas: I would like to thank Monsieur Alain Bernier from Gogama for signing this petition that has been signed by another 436 people. It reads as follows:

"Whereas at 2 a.m. on March 7, 2015, a Canadian National train derailed in Gogama;

"Whereas this derailment caused numerous tank cars carrying crude oil to explode, catch fire and spill over one million litres of oil into the Makami River; and

"Whereas residents continue to plainly observe oil and find dead fish in the Makami River as well as Lake Minisinakwa, despite the fact that the Ministry of the Environment has declared the cleanup complete;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly:

"That the Ministry of the Environment require CN to continue the cleanup of Gogama's soil and waterways until the residents are assured of clean and safe water for themselves, the environment and the wildlife."

I will ask page Tori to bring it to the Clerk.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have another petition that I've been asked to read into the record, signed by a significant number of my constituents. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in Ontario, abortion is a service covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP), paying for more than 32,000 abortions at hospitals and private abortion facilities, at a cost to taxpayers of at least \$30 million per year; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness; and abortion is not a medical necessity and therefore should not be covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To cease providing taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions by passing legislation to remove abortion as a service covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan."

DISASTER RELIEF

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier M. et M^{me} Roland et Juliette Secord pour avoir signé la pétition, and it reads as follows :

"Whereas ... on March 7, 2015, a Canadian National train derailed outside the village of Gogama;

"Whereas this derailment caused numerous tank cars carrying crude oil to explode, catch fire and spill over one million litres of crude oil into the Makami River;

"Whereas the fire spewed toxic black smoke for over 24 hours, spreading ash and residue throughout the surrounding area;

"Whereas no one has given a clear answer on whether or not the fish caught downriver from the derailment site is safe to eat;

"Whereas this was CN's third northern Ontario derailment in a month;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Help the people of Gogama and Mattagami First Nation get just and fair compensation from CN."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Matthew to bring it to the Clerk.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

"Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I agree, have signed this and will send to the table with Sarah.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Tiffany Fahey from Dowling in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are affected by the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

"Whereas too many workers are unprotected by current minimum standards outlined in employment and labour laws; and

"Whereas the Ontario government is currently engaging in a public consultation to review and improve employment and labour laws in the province.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Implement a minimum wage of \$15 an hour.

I'll affix my name to this and ask Makayla to bring it to the Clerk.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have another petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Liberal government and Premier Kathleen Wynne announced on March 29th that children with autism over five years old will be ineligible to receive intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) therapy; and

“Whereas in 2014-15 there were 16,158 children with autism on the wait-list for IBI and applied behavioural analysis (ABA) therapy; and

“Whereas approximately 3,500 children with autism that are on the wait-list or currently receiving therapy in Ontario will be ineligible to receive IBI therapy as a result of the government’s decision; and

“Whereas children over the age of five still respond to therapy and IBI remains their best shot at learning to communicate with the world around them and developing a degree of independence;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“That the Liberal government and Premier Kathleen Wynne reverse this decision and allow children over five years old to access IBI therapy.”

Of course I support this as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

END AGE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST STROKE RECOVERY PATIENTS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 VISANT À METTRE FIN À LA DISCRIMINATION FONDÉE SUR L’ÂGE ENVERS LES MALADES SE RÉTABLISSANT D’UN ACCIDENT VASCULAIRE CÉRÉBRAL

Mr. Coe moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act / Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise in the Legislature this afternoon to debate Bill 9. This is my first in the Legislature and it’s a critically important one for so many in our province who have suffered a stroke.

In April 2015, former MPP Christine Elliott tabled a motion calling on the government to find the necessary year-end savings to provide post-stroke recovery services

for those unfortunate Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 years of age.

1340

Since that motion was unanimously carried over a year ago, nothing has been done by the government to address the issue. As the member of provincial Parliament for Whitby–Oshawa—the same riding Christine Elliott and her late husband, Jim Flaherty, combined to represent since 1995—I’m pleased to carry forward her initiative on such an important issue.

Ms. Elliott was the architect of the motion adopted in 2015, but the champion for it and for this proposed legislation was Jim McEwen, a resident of Durham region who suffered a devastating stroke in his mid-50s. Jim is a member of the Durham Region Stroke Recovery Group and, together with fellow members, including current president Steve Madeley, has joined us in the Speaker’s gallery today. They are here to lend their support to the bill and are representative of so many other similar groups across the province. The Durham Region Stroke Recovery Group has done just an absolutely outstanding job of raising awareness for this issue and, at the same time, providing support for each other, important support.

After being discharged home from his 12 days—12 days—of outpatient care in 2010, Jim requested more publicly funded physiotherapy. The response of his social worker at that time was, “You’re done. This is all you are going to get.” It was at that moment that Jim knew he was in trouble—serious trouble.

How would any reasonable man or woman in the same position feel? Jim had just suffered a devastating and life-altering physical event. He had no reasonable probability of returning to his work. He desperately needed physiotherapy services. However, the dark realization then set in: that the financial resources for continuing his post-stroke recovery must come from his own savings.

Why wasn’t Jim McEwen able to obtain the necessary public funding for his post-stroke recovery? He was neither under the age of 20 years, nor was he over the age of 65 years. Like so many other thousands of post-stroke survivors, his age was the sole determinant of the care for which he was entitled. This made no sense to Jim, and from that day to this, he’s worked tirelessly to have the necessary legislation amended so that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care be obligated to provide post stroke-treatment and physiotherapy services for people between the ages 20 and 64, as recommended by their own physicians.

While on this lonely journey, Jim, like so many other Ontarians, has paid thousands of dollars monthly from family savings and retirement savings to allow him to live a more normal life at home. RRSPs are intended to provide retirement income, not to fund needed health care. Clearly, not everyone has the ability to be able to spend out of pocket to fund their physiotherapy.

This bill is about today, but it’s also about ensuring physiotherapy is there for future generations. Stroke survivors need a publicly funded health care system that they can rely on at a time when they are most vulnerable.

In the debate prior to the motion that was unanimously adopted in this Legislature in 2015, then-MPP Elliott rightly pointed out that research has found that frequent and consistent post-stroke community-based rehabilitation, like speech-language pathology, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, can significantly enhance the health and mobility of patients. But effective treatment is also time sensitive. Patients can't be told, "Come back in 10 years when you're 65." The time for treatment should not be delayed, yet for so many it is.

The evidence-based review of stroke rehabilitation funded by the Canadian Partnership for Stroke Recovery, a publication which now includes reviews from 4,500 worldwide studies, states, "There is strong evidence that the relatively greater functional improvements made by patients rehabilitated on specialized stroke units when compared to general medical units are maintained over the short term and long term."

The initial and time-limited stroke treatment regime is often inadequate for many stroke patients. Stroke patients in this affected age group, like Jim McEwen and so many others, are spending thousands from their own pockets each month to purchase private and expensive recovery programs. Added to this woeful situation, many of these stroke victims are not working while they attend these private recovery programs.

The system is failing this group, and it's failing their families. Not only are they prevented from obtaining the treatment required, they are not provided with a seamless path to rehabilitation. Now, without payment from their own resources, they lose the possibility of becoming again productive contributors to our economy. They want to be contributors. These are young men and women, many of whom have a significant part of their working lives ahead of them.

I read with interest a report by the Heart and Stroke Foundation which was published in 2014. It's entitled 2014 Stroke Report: Together Against a Rising Tide. The report concluded that fewer Canadians are dying from stroke thanks to advances in prevention, care and treatment, but it said that "we face an urgent need to do even better."

Data gathered for the report revealed that while outcomes and prevention, treatment and care all have improved, "younger people are having strokes and this trend is expected to continue." The report went on to point out that not enough patients are getting access to the care and rehabilitation they need to have the best possible outcomes.

Although strokes are most common in people over 70 years, the data revealed an alarming escalation for those under 70. This 2014 Heart and Stroke report identified that strokes for people in their fifties had increased by 24% over the previous decade, and by 13% for people in their sixties. Finally, it reported that international studies predict that stroke rates among people aged 24 to 64 will double in the next 15 years. The problem is very real and it has been corroborated by the evidence just provided and cited.

It's incumbent upon us to do the right thing to provide members of this group with the health care they need to ensure that they have the opportunity to regain their status as productive members of the Ontario workforce and, at the same time, to protect their financial futures at a point in their lives when they would otherwise have little chance of financial recovery, all due to circumstances beyond their control.

I believe we have an obligation to be fair and reasonable as we take steps to improve our system of health care. This is an identified problem that spans all political boundaries, and each of us has an obligation to correct it. Bill 9 provides a solution and, with all-party support, we can make such a huge difference, an important difference, in the lives of so many Ontario residents and their families.

There is an overriding principle that is in our evolved democracy, where we have an obligation to provide care to all citizens, not just some of them. It's our duty to oversee the structure for that care.

1350

And so, Madam Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues here today to pass this legislation and move it to a standing committee. Let's make Jim McEwen's life, and the lives of so many other Ontarians, the very best that they can be. Let's do the right thing and provide them with the health care they deserve.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you to the member from Whitby-Oshawa for this important opportunity to speak to Bill 9, the End Age Discrimination Against Stroke Recovery Patients Act.

As you all know, this bill follows a motion introduced by the former member for Whitby-Oshawa last April, which I was also then pleased to support, and I appreciate the member from Whitby-Oshawa bringing that motion back in the form of a bill.

Speaker, the purpose of this bill is: "To ensure that any treatment recommended by a physician for a patient who is recovering from a stroke is provided to that patient promptly, regardless of the patient's age."

Under the current system, access to publicly funded post-stroke care, such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy, is only provided to youth and seniors; more specifically, patients who are under 20 or over 64. Those between the ages of 20 and 64 are provided up to 12 physiotherapy sessions after they are discharged from the hospital, and that's it. If someone suffers a stroke between the ages of 20 and 64, well, tough luck. Speaker, that leaves a massive portion of the population to fend for themselves, based simply on their age. That is discrimination, and it must be changed.

As members of provincial Parliament, sometimes our job is to come up with great ideas, but more often than not, our job is to recognize them when they are brought before us. As the MPP for the neighbouring riding of Oshawa, I have had the opportunity to meet with the Durham Region Stroke Recovery Group on this very

issue. As I understand, it has been their tireless efforts that brought this issue to the attention of the former member in the first place, so we thank them for their advocacy and for their persistence. I have appreciated the regular dialogue that Jim McEwen and the group has maintained with my office, as well as their continued advocacy for other important issues, from disability rights to hydro rates. As MPPs, we often have to use our voices, but it's also important that we use our ears from time to time too. So we thank them for sharing ideas and for making us listen.

But back to the matter at hand: Post-stroke recovery care should be universally accessible to all Ontarians who are recovering from a stroke and need the right care to regain their lives, period. We have a public health care system in Ontario, yet stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 are being forced to rely on private care. For those that are fortunate enough to have private insurance, this means fighting through an arduous process through their insurance providers. For those that don't, the options are even worse.

According to the Ontario Stroke Network, more than 15,000 people are hospitalized with strokes in Ontario every year, at an estimated cost to the economy of more than \$1 billion. Health care isn't cheap, and that's why we have a public health care system: so that no Ontarian will be forced to choose between their health and their home. But that's what we have happening here right now in Ontario, and this is not an isolated problem.

Stroke is the leading cause of adult disability in Canada. According to the Ministry of Health, over 90,000 Ontarians currently live with the effects of strokes. I wonder how many of them were lucky enough to be under 20 or over 64 when they had their stroke. That's a morbid question, but it's the reality under this government, and that's a shame.

Patients should not have to rely on private insurance or fall through the gaps. Stroke patients deserve universal access to rehabilitative care. This is not the first time that this government has heard this: They've heard it when the previous member from Whitby–Oshawa introduced a motion; they've heard it from countless individuals that have been affected by this unfairness; and they've heard it from members like myself who contacted the ministry or delivered member statements on this very issue. But here we are: Another year has passed and this government continues to leave thousands of post-stroke patients to fend for themselves.

With access to rehabilitative post-stroke care, patients can make remarkable recoveries. They just need to be able to afford it first.

In 2013, the Toronto Star reported that some patients in Ontario are paying more than \$1,000 a week for private rehab therapy to regain their ability to dress themselves, move their limbs and speak clearly. Families are draining their retirement savings just to pay for the care that they need. In that article, the reporter, Bob Hepburn, wrote that “despite years of pleading by health professionals and patients, Ontario still lacks a publicly

funded strategy to help people who need long-term, outpatient therapy.”

Speaker, the government supported the previous motion on this issue. They should support this bill today. It's time for them to take action moving forward.

As I said earlier, post-stroke recovery care should be universally accessible to all Ontarians who are recovering from a stroke and need the right care to regain their lives, period. This would be a proactive investment in our health care system that would make a world of difference to this group of people and that could save the government money in the long term.

So I ask that the government consider the impact of their decisions, remember the commitment that they've made to stroke victims and put the interests of patients first, instead of trying to balance the budget on their backs. This is a fundamental issue of health, care, dignity, accessibility and fairness.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to rise to speak to the bill proposed by MPP Coe.

I wanted to share a story with you before I get into the content of the bill. My grandfather, Ivan, whom I've referred to in this Legislature before, was an immigrant to Canada. When I was in my early twenties, he came over to my house with my grandmother because they wanted to make me an embroidered shirt. In the Ukrainian tradition, it's very common to have an embroidered shirt, and they wanted to come to my home to measure the shirt that they were in the process of making for me. I remember my mom telling me about this, and I said, “Well, Mom, I'm kind of busy.” She said, “Look, they're coming over and they really want to see you.” I said, “Okay. I absolutely will make time for that.” So I came home from work early, and they measured the shirt, and we had a great conversation. The next morning, I got a call from my mom, and she said, “Your grandfather has had a stroke.” My grandfather never spoke again after that. He lived for another year and a half or so. He struggled. He couldn't move most of his body—one side of his body was completely immobile—and he couldn't speak.

So our family understands, and I understand, the potentially tragic consequences and symptoms of someone who has had a stroke. I'm very sympathetic to the needs of people who have had a stroke and the families of those who are caring for those who have had a stroke.

In my role as MPP, I represent a community called Etobicoke Centre, and I also often rise in this House to talk about how I represent a large community of seniors. Post-stroke care, post-intensive care is something that I meet with my constituents on a lot and advocate on a lot here, as MPP. Making sure that people, no matter what their age is, get the care that is needed is so important.

Minister Hoskins has shared with me how important it is that we provide quality care to all stroke patients. The ministry is taking steps, as part of the Patients First action plan, to improve the quality of care to Ontarians for post-

stroke care. I know that some of these changes that have been brought into place have increased equitable access to publicly funded physiotherapy services across the province. Also, an important part of that is increasing the accountability among providers to make sure that they deliver the highest quality of care and physio services that are needed.

Currently, for those who are in the post-acute phase of stroke recovery, those services are offered in a number of settings: hospitals, hospital outpatient clinics, in-home care, long-term-care homes, community physio clinics. Across Ontario, there are currently 258 community physio clinics providing services in over 150 communities, with annual funding of approximately \$44 million by our government for Ontarians aged 20 to 64, which I know are the folks that the member is trying to support and advocate on behalf of. They are eligible for services in CPCs if treatment is required post-hospitalization and if the individual is the recipient of ODSP or Ontario Works.

1400

In my limited few seconds, I will simply say that we need to make sure that all Ontarians get the care that they need and deserve. I have to say, as someone who has seen someone who is really close to me suffer through a stroke and ultimately pass away from the symptoms of that stroke, that I know how tragic this can be and how difficult it can be. I know that Minister Hoskins and our government will continue to work to make sure that we deliver the best possible care for all Ontarians across Ontario and the quality of care that Ontarians deserve.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 9, An Act to amend the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act, 2016. I'm pleased to support my colleague and Whitby MPP Lorne Coe's PMB, which was originally introduced by our former colleague and MPP Christine Elliott and actually received all-party support back in 2015.

I have two reasons for supporting Bill 9—and maybe a few others if I get through my time and still have a bit left on the clock. First, I believe the bill, once and for all, fixes the ongoing age discrimination for stroke victims in Ontario. Specifically, it will ensure fairness by guaranteeing that all Ontario stroke patients will receive recovery services, regardless of their age. Right now, the only stroke victims eligible to receive government-funded recovery services, like physiotherapy, have to be younger than 19 or older than 65. I think the minister responsible, who is also a physician, knows the good news here: Patients can greatly improve their post-stroke lives with consistent and frequent rehabilitative services, which is something Bill 9 will ensure happens. I hope the health minister supports it and that he has advised his colleagues to do the same.

Secondly, I support Bill 9 as a big champion and supporter of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Consider their statistics: An estimated 1.6 million Canadians are

living with heart disease or the effects of a stroke. It's a challenge to our economy. Billions of dollars are lost every year in physician services, hospital costs, lost wages and decreased productivity, not to mention the stress to the patient and their family. By adopting my colleague's Bill 9, we will help between 5,000 and 10,000 post-stroke patients in Ontario who are being denied public treatment services because of their age. We will also—and this is very important—help them regain their confidence and the opportunity to be productive and contributing members of our communities.

I want to acknowledge Jim McEwen, a resident from the Durham region who has been a driving force behind this file, calling on the Liberals to bring forward post-stroke recovery for those between the ages of 20 and 64.

Madam Speaker, I'm not certain that any of us can ever truly understand what would happen—to have a stroke—and how we could ever gauge that someone who is 21 or 40 or maybe even 50, like me, has a stroke and there's no service for them. I'm a former recreation director, and I've always been a person who believes in proactive treatment: Try to keep people well, first and foremost, but then give them the services to rehabilitate them as quickly as possible and give them that confidence and that ability to lead those productive lives that they once knew. So it has always baffled me that we would ever have a law that would take a sector of our society and say, "You do not deserve"—and sometimes it can be a matter of a couple of days. You turn 20, and you had the stroke two days ago. We have to correct this.

I'm really pleased that one of our newest members, Mr. Coe, has taken this on—and the community that's doing it. Mr. McEwen is a post-stroke recovery patient who began to show improvement while in physiotherapy, and I commend him for continuing to press this forward. We really, really need all members here—again, it has already been voted on once and passed unanimously by all three parties. You would wonder why it hasn't already been implemented and why it hasn't already been changed. I certainly will be here to ensure that I will be voting for it. I hope that the rest of the government will do the same. I look forward to hearing what my additional colleagues have to say.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, am happy to have a few minutes to talk about this important issue. I want to thank Mr. McEwen and all of his supporters for coming here and the MPP for bringing this bill forward.

It's quite simple. I represent the NDP. We are the party who brought you medicare. We are the party who keeps saying that care should be based on needs, not on ability to pay and not on some made-up numbers that the government dreams up to punish people, frankly.

The effect of a stroke can be light, but it can also be life-altering, where the person will live with a disability for the rest of their life. I am old, and I remember working on the intensive rehab unit for a long time. A big wing of the intensive rehab unit was our specialized

stroke program, where we had physiotherapists working with occupational therapists, with speech pathologists and with social workers, as well as all of the prosthetics and orthotics that go with it. If you have a drop foot, you'll need an orthosis. If you have no spasticity in your shoulder—this would be a shoulder drop—you need a special brace to hold the shoulder in place so it doesn't dislocate. If you cannot regain walking, then you will need a cane or a quad cane or a walker or a wheelchair. All of that took place during the intensive rehab unit stay.

Then, as things progressed, we opened up an outpatient neurological unit. So people who lived within driving distance of the hospital did not have to stay in the hospital anymore. They would stay home, but still come and get the intensive therapy that changed the lives of so, so many people.

When you first face somebody who has had a serious stroke, they are at a loss. Yesterday, they had an able, capable body, and the next day they look at a disability that they don't know how to cope with. This is where the team comes in. This is where a team of rehab changes things for the better. We know what to do. We know what they can expect. We can guide them. We can help them, as well as keeping them as strong as possible as the long-term effects of the stroke become better and better known.

All of this, all of those good things, can only happen if you have a team that follows you in the long term, because the post-effect of a stroke is not obvious in the emergency room. It will become obvious six weeks, three months, six months, and sometimes it's a full year before we see it.

I have seen stroke victims who were completely flaccid; you couldn't get a reaction out of one side of their bodies. A stroke usually happens on one side of your brain—it's either a clot comes or a blood vessel bleeds into your brain—and that will mean that the opposite side of your body doesn't respond anymore. If it happens to be on the left side of your brain, there's a chance that it will also affect your speech.

All of those effects have an effect instantly, when the stroke is happening, but can also have an effect that will change over days, weeks and months. This is where physiotherapists and occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists—this is where we do our miracles. This is where we are able to take people who would otherwise never have been able to walk again and get them to walk. If we see a little bit of spasticity developing, we will make sure that we stimulate those muscles so that you can use the spasticity to take your body weight and stand up again.

What everybody wants when we first see them is to be able to walk. They want to be able to get out of their bed. Then the arms become important, but the first thing everybody wants is to be able to stand up and to be able to walk.

All of this is only available to you if you are before the age of 20—thank God, very few strokes happen in that age group, but it does happen—or if you're over the age

of 65, for a reason completely unknown to me. It is not based on any scientific data; it's not based on a body of evidence that shows—if you are over 20 or under 65, none of that is available to you unless you're rich, unless you are able to go without an income, without working, and pay for this privately.

What happened to medicare, Speaker? Medicare means that care will be there based on your needs and not on ability to pay. We have a Liberal government who speaks a good game about how important it is to maintain medicare, but at every step of the way, they privatize. When you starve our hospitals of any kind of increase in their budget, do you know what they do? Anything that is not intense hospital care gets sent into the community. What does being sent into the community mean? It means that it is sent to the private sector, where people with deep pockets will make a recovery from their stroke and the rest of them will go without the care that we know will change their lives for the better, and this is a shame.

1410

We have talked about this before in this chamber. It has received support from all parties. I thank the member for bringing this forward. Let's do the right thing. Let's not only pass it to second reading, but let's change the laws in Ontario for the better.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you to the member from Whitby—Oshawa for introducing this bill. I am pleased to speak to Bill 9, the End Age Discrimination Against Stroke Recovery Patients Act.

I have a constituent in my riding, Mr. Jim McEwen, who has been a very strong advocate for ending age discrimination against stroke recovery patients. I know Jim is with us today, and a group of advocates who are advocating for this very, very, important issue.

I can tell you that I've met with Mr. McEwen at my office and have been assisting him in ensuring his message has been shared with the Ministry of Health. I've discussed this matter with the minister on several occasions and he's doing his best, as we all know, to make sure victims of stroke get the services that they need and require.

I admire the passion with which Mr. McEwen approaches advocacy.

Our government is committed to providing quality care to all stroke patients. As part of the Patients First action plan, we have already taken steps to improve the quality of care provided in Ontario for post-stroke care. Our government is committed to strengthening post-acute care pathways for persons who have suffered a stroke and we support a number of initiatives to provide stroke rehabilitation services in Ontario—to all Ontarians.

One of these initiatives is the health system funding reform, HSFR, which is a patient-centred, evidence-informed funding model that reflects local population needs and strengthens the links between high-quality care and fiscal sustainability.

One of the key HSFR levers is the implementation of quality-based procedures, QBPs. QBPs are health services with clusters of patients of all ages with clinically related diagnoses, treatments and functional needs that present an opportunity to standardize payment around available evidence, reduce cost variation and improve outcomes for all stroke patients.

QBP clinical handbooks summarize the evidence-informed leading clinical practices for these services in Ontario. The QBP Clinical Handbook for Stroke has been updated to include post-acute stroke care, and the Ontario Stroke Network is a key partner in its development. Additionally, through bundled care approaches, we're helping people of all ages transition more smoothly out of hospital and into their homes.

Our government is moving forward with bundled care models that provide a single payment to a team of health care providers to cover care for patients, both in the hospital and at home, starting with six sites across the province. One of these sites is focusing on stroke patients. As a patient moves through the system and back to their home, they will be supported by a consistent health care team and services will be coordinated around the patient's needs. The results of these first six sites will inform plans to support bundled care more broadly across the province.

I am grateful to Mr. McEwen and those like him who work tirelessly to bring these concerns to the fore, and I look forward to the results of our work and ensuring needs are met using methods that are evidence-based and fiscally responsible.

I am going to be supporting this bill today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: We do this sort of rotation. It's always hard when you first get elected and you understand how everything works here—but I understand why we can't just sit down and discuss these things, because we all know it would just descend into a screaming match. It's frustrating that it's the second time I'm speaking to this issue. We've had to begin all over again with private members' bills.

Christine Elliott, my former colleague, actually introduced me to Jim McEwen in the hall. I remember speaking to him—and his wife was there. Jim had a stroke under the age of 65 and only gets 12 sessions of physiotherapy covered for rehabilitation. That's not sufficient. We all know it's not sufficient. There's a new term now that we're hearing called "ageism," which is usually used to mean that people who are older than a certain age feel they're discriminated against. Here, we have ageism in a different direction: that people between the ages of 20 and 64 aren't being covered for the same amount as people over 65, and there's absolutely no reason for it.

I just want to mention that the member from Durham spoke about his government being so supportive. Well, back on April 6, 2015, Health Minister Eric Hoskins was quoted in the *Toronto Star* saying, "Our government is not only committed to providing the best possible care

for stroke patients, but is moving on that important issue of ensuring that it's also provided on the rehabilitative side of things." Well, that was quite a while ago, and yet we're not seeing much movement. It's very frustrating, and I want to remind everybody that taxes are paid in this province to cover things like this. I don't think there's one person of any age in the province who would feel that this is just, that this is fair, that this is helpful, that this is good for the economy and good for people's life savings.

I remember Mr. McEwen saying to me that he had to cash in his RRSPs to fund his treatment. Here we have a government that keeps talking to us about people saving for their retirement and ensuring that people have a proper income in their retirement. Well, if people have to cash in their RRSPs to pay for health care, we know they may not be having the retirement that they deserve and that they had saved for.

I think there's a wrong assumption that everybody has private insurance, between the ages of 20 and 65 that somehow magically covers everything. That is not the case. As somebody who worked as an optometrist, I can attest to the fact that when people lost their eye examinations being covered between 20 and 65, many people stopped getting their eyes checked. I don't see how that saves the public any money. I don't see how that provides public good or good care in Ontario.

I'm looking forward to this going to committee, and I'm looking forward to seeing this government move quickly. Maybe it doesn't have to go to committee; maybe they can just amend the health care act and let's just get it done.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I was looking to the NDP to see if they were going to speak again, but if not, I'll proceed.

First of all, I'm very pleased to speak to this bill for a number of reasons. One, it's been brought forward by a fellow Durham MPP, Lorne Coe from Whitby-Oshawa, and I thank him from bringing it forward. I know our former colleague in Durham Christine Elliott had brought that forward as a motion before a bill. I want to acknowledge him for that.

I want to acknowledge Jim McEwen and the other folks from Durham region who are here today in support of this. I want to thank them for the meeting they had—it was in Bowmanville, I believe. I remember seeing Mayor Foster at that meeting, so it was Bowmanville. You invited me and other government MPPs to meet with you and to tell me about your stroke recovery journey. I'm very appreciative of that meeting and sharing your perspective. Then, since we've met, I've become the new Ontario minister for accessibility. That's another lens I'm looking at all of this through.

1420

They say timing is everything. I always cared about accessibility before I was appointed as the Ontario minister, but now it's particularly important to me, and I'm very honoured to have this role.

I'm listening very carefully to this debate, Speaker, because, at the end of the day, we want all barriers removed for people who are disabled now, who have challenges now or may face those in the future. We're on a continuum of life together. It is not about disabled people or people with challenges here and everybody else. We're on one life continuum. It's not just a human rights issue. It is the most important thing to do: to allow everyone to participate fully in this great province called Ontario—to fully participate in employment, to fully participate in our transit systems, to fully be able to access a building or a computer system, and, yes, to be able to have good health care.

I am a believer that the health care system here in Ontario is great. It's there when you need it. I think that bills like this give good advice to government as well. I think our government is very open to this and other mechanisms to look at health care in Ontario.

I know that this motion passed before, Speaker. I am hopeful it will pass again today. But, again, I want to personally thank Jim and all of his friends and colleagues who are here today for helping me understand your journey.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak at second reading to Bill 9, An Act to amend the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act, standing in the name of our colleague the member for Whitby–Oshawa. I, too, wish to welcome our guests to the chamber today. It's great to have them here to have the opportunity to hear what's debated and to view the Legislature in action.

First of all, I want to commend the member for Whitby–Oshawa, who joined us earlier this year—February 11, which was a big day for us, when he was elected to serve in this Legislature. He has been doing an outstanding job. He has done a great deal of important work on behalf of his constituents going back to February, and he's a very, very important member of our caucus team. He's our critic for advanced education and skills development. He also serves on the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

He comes here with a great breadth of experience in the private and public sectors. He worked in the Ontario public service for many years, but he also served for many years on the Whitby town council and Durham regional council. So he brings a great deal of wisdom and perspective to every issue, and it's fantastic that he's bringing this forward today.

I want to read from an article which appeared in the Independent and Free Press, the newspaper which serves Halton Hills, in their April 9, 2015, edition. This is the article which appeared in the paper:

"On April 2, the Ontario Legislature debated and passed an important resolution aimed at improving rehabilitation services for victims of stroke.

"While stroke is the third leading cause of death in Canada, it is estimated that there are 90,000 people in Ontario today who are living with the effects of a stroke.

"Strokes account for 20,000 emergency visits and 15,350 in-patient hospital admissions.

"Fifty-five per cent of stroke patients are discharged home from hospital, but 23% are discharged to rehabilitation facilities.

"Among patients who need outpatient or community-based rehabilitation, all will need physiotherapy and occupational therapy and half will need speech-language pathology.

"Almost every family has been touched by this debilitating condition, including my own.

"In spite of all of this, there is hope.

"Research has shown that frequent and consistent post-stroke rehabilitation—speech-language pathology, physiotherapy and occupational therapy—can significantly enhance the health and mobility of patients.

"Unfortunately, there is currently a gap in coverage for rehabilitation services for stroke victims who are between the ages of 20 and 64.

"If they do not have private health insurance, they may not be able to access the rehabilitation services they need which would enable them to recover to the greatest extent possible.

"My colleague Whitby–Oshawa MPP Christine Elliott deserves credit for highlighting this issue in the Ontario Legislature.

"Her motion, urging the government to find necessary in-year savings to fill in this gap in needed health services for Ontarians, received the unanimous support of the House.

"Now, it is up to the government to respond."

Madam Speaker, we need the government to respond to this bill and to deal with this issue and to do it immediately after the passage of it, in the terms of the legislation in this House.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: In the brief time I have left, I did want to commend the member from Whitby–Oshawa for bringing forward a really important bill that would end age discrimination for treatment of people that have suffered from strokes. People between 20 and 64 are currently not receiving proper care, so I think this is a really important bill.

I did want to also bring up the fact that across the province, there is just not even stroke care around Ontario. I have seen in my own office, particularly down on the Muskoka side of Parry Sound–Muskoka, that I'm receiving all kinds of complaints into the constituency office from people unhappy with the care they're receiving post-stroke. It seems to be more on the Muskoka side.

I have actually spoken with the CEO of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare, Natalie Bubela, about it. I have met with the local health integration network on this issue. They have admitted that more work needs to be done. In fact, in response to one of the letters that I wrote on behalf of a constituent, they said they have a stroke project that is starting. It's starting from the south and

slowly working its way north, so that we will not start to see something happening until beginning in April 2018.

All I can say is that a lot more needs to be done. I have seen it first-hand. I have neighbours who have suffered severe strokes. My good friend John O'Byrne in Vankoughnet suffered a stroke April 27 and he's still in the Bracebridge hospital to this day. I wish him well. But I just see that we could do so much more for people who have suffered a stroke. Particularly, I believe, in some of the rural areas around the province, there needs to be a lot more done.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Whitby–Oshawa to wrap up.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to thank, to begin, the members of my own caucus who spoke on this particular bill. The MPP from Oshawa, the MPP from Etobicoke Centre, and Minister MacCharles, the minister responsible for women's issues and accessibility, all spoke very eloquently about the merits of the bill and how it can move the pendulum forward. That's what we want to be able to do.

What's clear is that Bill 9 places the control of stroke treatment in the hands, ultimately, of medical physicians. That's where it should be. This means that stroke treatment will be based upon need, and not age restrictions that we've spoken about thus far. Equally important within the discussion of the bill is that it will significantly help future young adult stroke patients and possibly help them to return to work to become taxpayers again.

I think it's true that all members in this assembly have met stroke survivors who are struggling with their recovery. We know that within the context of this particular legislation, that help will be available to them. In discussing the bill, there's no dispute about receiving initial acute care and physiotherapy. What this bill does, though, again, is help them potentially receive the extension of that OHIP-funded physiotherapy to make their lives and the lives of their families better.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. Orders of the day.

MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND
SOCIAL SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT
(SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RESEARCH
COMMISSION), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES
SOCIAUX ET COMMUNAUTAIRES
(COMMISSION DE RECHERCHE
SUR L'AIDE SOCIALE)

Mr. Paul Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to amend the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act to establish the Social Assistance Research Commission / Projet de loi 6, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère des Services sociaux et communautaires afin de créer la Commission de recherche sur l'aide sociale.

1430

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to begin by thanking everyone who has been involved in the Fix the Gap campaign to support Bill 6 and the establishment of a social assistance research commission.

I want especially to recognize Tom Cooper and Craig Foye, who have been pushing for evidence-based social assistance rates for a decade now, and were deeply involved in the drafting of Bill 185 and now Bill 6. I would like to thank Laura Cattari and Peter Clutterbuck, who spoke this morning with great knowledge and passion about our social assistance system.

There are so many others I would like to thank, but I can name only a few, including Jennifer Laidley, Nancy Vander Plaats, the NDP's own Jonah Schein, our researcher Karalena McLean and my assistant Martin McKane. Thank you as well to our legislative counsel, Liron Taub. I also want to thank the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale for introducing the precursor of this bill, Bill 235, back in 2007.

Speaker, less than six months ago I stood in this chamber to debate my private member's bill on evidence-based policy-making and social assistance. If you had told me that I'd be standing back here so soon, I would have been overjoyed; I would have thought that this important bill had gone through committee and was back on the floor for third reading. Unfortunately, it never got the chance. It was passed unanimously in second reading, but it was never called for committee hearings. And then, along with almost every private member's bill, it died on the order paper when the Legislature was prorogued earlier this month.

But I wasn't willing to let the story end with prorogation, and neither was my party. Too many committed and compassionate citizens have fought for years to get this issue back on the provincial agenda. I'm sure many of you can tell from the calls you've received lately: People around Ontario are raising their voices to demand that we take action together to reduce poverty now; to make sure that our social safety net is strong enough to hold any of us up should we fall victims of circumstances; to ensure that a decent standard of living is available to us all; and to allow us and our children access to the opportunities that each one of us deserves in this life.

We have a chance here to restore dignity and opportunity for 900,000 social assistance recipients in this province who have often become trapped in a cycle of deep poverty. Here today in one of the richest societies the world has ever seen, people across Ontario cannot afford to pay their rent or buy groceries because social assistance rates have fallen far below basic needs.

Children are going to school hungry. It has become impossible for the poorest people in the province to make ends meet. Since 1995, the price of a loaf of bread or a dozen eggs has more than doubled. Rent and hydro have gone through the roof. In that time, social assistance for a

single person has gone up by just \$18 a month; that's barely 2% in 21 years.

Social assistance rates have not kept pace with inflation and fallen hundreds of dollars short of covering basic needs such as food and shelter. The last time this bill was debated, the member from St. Catharines spoke about the need for those given the privilege and the awesome responsibility of public office to protect the most vulnerable people in our society. Well, it's time we stepped up to the plate, Speaker.

We all understand that governments are often forced by economic and financial pressures to find ways to save money, make cuts. If I may quote him, he said that "when it's on the most vulnerable people in the province, that is something I find particularly unacceptable." I agree with the member from St. Catharines; he's right.

I believe that as a society and as individuals we have a moral obligation to support one another and to take care of our most vulnerable. The hard truth, however, is that the tough decisions governments make rarely affect people like them, people who have the means to sustain themselves and to live in comfort. The tough decisions too often seem to hurt the people who are already struggling, and one bad decision can have repercussions for decades and reverberate through generations of people.

Speaker, social assistance rates in Ontario suffered severe cuts under Mike Harris and have never been reversed by the current Liberal government. Real inflation-adjusted rates are substantially lower today than they were prior to 1996. They've been on a steady downward trend for the last two decades. Currently, rates are set arbitrarily without any reference to the real cost of living. As a result, recipients are mired in deep poverty and they struggle to access nutritious food and adequate shelter.

Speaker, the majority of unemployed workers in Ontario are not eligible for EI benefits. The EI system is particularly poorly adapted to the realities of precarious work in our urban centres. In Toronto, less than 20% of unemployed workers are eligible for EI. Even for those who are eligible for EI, what happens when the benefits run out and when not enough jobs can be created and there's nowhere else to turn? It's no surprise that so many workers who lose their jobs are forced to rely on social assistance in order just to survive.

Over 900,000 people in the province rely on Ontario Works or ODSP, but more than half of these families do not have enough to eat. It's a shame, Speaker. Why has this happened? Isn't social assistance supposed to ensure that even the least fortunate in our society have the resources to access adequate shelter, eat sufficient and nutritious food, clothe themselves and live in health and with some dignity?

The first reason, obviously, is the cuts of the 1990s, but the real cause is that the rates are arbitrary and are set by the political whim of the government of that day. There is no framework, no research and no evidence to inform decision-making or to inform the members of the Legislature. Social assistance rates are not—I repeat—are

not indexed to inflation. Social assistance rates are not connected to the cost of living, either. And with the exception of a flat northern supplement, social assistance rates do not recognize the very different costs of living in the very different communities in our province.

People receiving social assistance are living on incomes far below the poverty line. Single adults on Ontario Works have total incomes that are less than half of Ontario's poverty line. In my own city of Hamilton, 75% to 80% of the people turning to food banks are in receipt of provincial social assistance. That should tell you something right there, Speaker. They should be able to, at least, afford food.

Children who grow up hungry suffer lasting ill effects on their health. They don't concentrate as well in school as their peers, they are more likely to end up with preventable chronic diseases such as asthma or diabetes and they internalize the shame and social stigma that goes with being poor. Even a short time spent in poverty compromises their educational and employment outcomes. The inadequacies of our social assistance system are robbing our children of their equal opportunity to succeed, and they are perpetuating inequalities that will resonate for decades and maybe generations. We know that it doesn't have to be this way.

Our province and our country have implemented highly effective policies to reduce poverty and food insecurity, particularly among children. In fact, we have an example that operates in this province under the jurisdiction of the federal government, where incomes are indexed to the cost of living. It's called CPP, Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement. It's an excellent poverty reduction program targeted at seniors. It's so effective that seniors have the lowest rate of food insecurity in Canada, even lower than adults in employment. As a result, turning 65 drops the risk of food insecurity in half for low-income adults in Canada.

But why are income support programs for the under-65 so inadequate? Is there anything special about the number 65 instead of 64? Why do we have a system where a 64-year-old in Ontario can live in grinding poverty but once they hit their 65th birthday, we double our efforts to ensure that they can live in health and dignity? If they make it to 65.

This isn't a system informed by research, by evidence or by morality. What you find in effective poverty reduction strategies everywhere, like our programs for seniors, is that benefits are set at levels sufficient to cover basic needs. They are based on evidence and research. That is exactly what we need in our social assistance program, Speaker: evidence-based rates.

Not many people in this chamber and this government have lived or experienced this type of poverty. They don't understand what it's like to not have fresh fruit or vegetables, or to not socialize because they can't afford shampoo one week or a cup of coffee the next. That's why it's so important to listen to people who do have that direct lived experience. That's why the social assistance research commission will have at least one member with

direct lived experience of Ontario Works and one member with direct lived experience of ODSP. We want this expert independent panel to be both knowledgeable and representative.

I would like the government and the members of this House to be provided with recommendations and advice based on the best expertise and experience available so that they can make informed decisions, not on political whims. We cannot allow programs as critical as income security to be politicized. We live in an age when the public demands more evidence and more transparency from the government, and rightly so. People expect that public policy decisions be made on the basis of careful research and informed analysis. People expect the research and analysis to be accessible for their own security and scrutiny. That is a good thing for the quality of public decision-making. Sunlight is both a powerful disinfectant and a wonderfully effective fact checker.

1440

The bill not only ensures that the research is conducted but that the results are published for the public to see. Passing the legislation will improve the quality of our decision-making, but more importantly, it gives us an opening to improve the life prospects of almost one million Ontarians. If we are to ensure that everyone in this province has a decent minimum standard of living, the first thing we need is hard and accurate information on the real cost of basic needs in different Ontario communities. The second thing we need, obviously, is the political will to translate the information into action, to ensure that everyone in this province is able to meet the costs of their basic needs.

This legislation aims to accomplish that first step. The social assistance research commission would provide the government and the public with hard evidence and research on the cost of living in different Ontario communities each year. It would recommend benefit rates that meet people's basic needs. The bill is real change, a step on a long road towards ending poverty in our province. It's only the first step, but it's a necessary step.

I hope that all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support this today, and please, this time ensure that the bill is heard at committee and moves on for third reading and becomes law in our province. The people of our province deserve better. As Martin Luther King famously said, "The time is always right to do what is right."

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'm very happy to be able to stand and speak to Bill 6 because it addresses some very important issues, especially around evidence-based decision-making and metrics of data collection. While I support the bill in principle, I would like the House to know that work is already well under way to make our social assistance programs as effective as possible for the people who need them.

We've heard from stakeholders and partners about the need to broaden discussions on the reform of social

assistance beyond rates to include aspects of the wider income security system. In fact, we've listened and we're moving forward to build a multi-year action plan to reform social assistance within the broader income security landscape, aligned with our efforts to combat poverty.

As a first step, we've established an Income Security Reform Working Group to develop a road map that focuses on needs and prioritizes actions for the most meaningful impact. A fundamental part of the working group's mandate is to recommend a methodology for how rates are set and adjusted. This will include consideration as to whether there is a benchmark against which social assistance rates should be set and then what mechanisms could be considered in how rates are adjusted over time. It would be premature for our government to anticipate the outcomes of those deliberations.

I know there has been a lot of interest in this House, in the community and across the province about the basic income pilot that we announced in the budget. Mr. Hugh Segal's discussion paper will help to inform discussion as we take that forward. It will be one aspect of the research that informs our plan around the Income Security Reform Working Group. We'll be testing the potential of a basic income to determine if it will provide more consistent supports to clients, streamline the delivery of income support and improve health, housing and employment outcomes for Ontarians.

In the meantime, Speaker, we're taking some important immediate steps to improve income security. Our government is ending the full clawback of child support from social assistance payments and flowing through the full amount of the new Canada child benefit to families receiving social assistance. This will have a significant impact on thousands of families and children across Ontario.

Currently, families receiving child support have their social assistance benefits reduced by the full amount of child support they receive. This means children are no better off financially when they receive child support and the parent responsible for making child support payments may feel little incentive to do so.

In early 2017, we're changing this rule so that families who receive both child support payments and social assistance are able to benefit from this income. Social assistance clients will also no longer be required to pursue child support as a condition of eligibility for social assistance—a requirement that clients and advocates have reported as a cause of distress.

A 100% exemption of child support means that approximately 19,000 families currently receiving social assistance will see an increase in the amount of monthly income available to them of about \$282 per month on average, or \$3,380 annually. In addition, low-income parents, including families with children receiving social assistance, saw the maximum Ontario Child Benefit increase from \$1,336 to \$1,356 per child in July of 2016, at the same time as the exempted CCB was launched.

We also became the first province in Canada to publicly commit to ensuring that families receiving social

assistance would fully benefit from the new federal Canada child benefit, the CCB, without any provincial clawbacks. As a result of that, almost 260,000 children in families who receive social assistance will benefit from the full amount of their Canada child benefit payment.

MCSS is designing a new, simpler medical review process and form with the assistance of the working group, which includes members of the medical, legal and advocacy communities.

Ontario is also simplifying the application process for young people with developmental disabilities and their families who are applying for ODSP. As of September 1, once a person is deemed eligible for ministry-funded adult developmental services, they will no longer have to go through a second process to verify their disability to qualify for the Ontario Disability Support Program. Families receiving SSAH funding for children under 18 with a developmental disability will no longer need to reapply every year for funding. This means that all those recipients will be automatically renewed at their current level of funding until they turn 18, as long as eligibility criteria are met.

Our government has also introduced a reloadable payment card to ODSP clients as a safer, easier way to access their benefits without having to use expensive cheque-cashing services.

In addition, we continue to increase our investments in social assistance. A few examples: With the 2016 Ontario budget, our government is investing about \$137 million annually to increase social assistance rates by \$25 a month. That's about 3% for Ontario Works singles with no children, 1.5% for Ontario Works families, 1.5% for individuals with disabilities receiving Ontario Disability Support Program, 1.5% in assistance for children with severe disabilities, and 1.5% to various other rates and benefit elements.

Madam Speaker, the list goes on. But I'll leave it there and say again that while in principle we support Bill 6, we are doing an awful lot of things already, especially with the working group, to move those principles ahead.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to rise today to join the debate on Bill 6, the Ministry of Community and Social Services Amendment Act (Social Assistance Research Commission) introduced by the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. This is actually the second time I've had the pleasure of speaking to this bill, since the government prorogued the Legislature, stalling its progress. I'm glad the member has reintroduced it.

Many of my comments will be the same this time around. Ultimately, I support this bill and believe a commission could provide expert opinion on social assistance rates. However, I remain concerned about the creation of more quasi-bureaucracy, and the fact that the government, as is its habit, can shelve the commission's work.

1450

Over the last year, I've had the opportunity to learn a great deal about the government's social assistance

system. I have heard from individuals receiving support through Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program, as well as from agencies advocating for changes to these programs. In my riding of Perth-Wellington, we frequently work with individuals who need assistance navigating the system. Now I hear stories from people across the province.

I'm interested in the ideas put forward by the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. I know that a lot of hard work has gone into the premise of this bill over the last number of years. Bill 6 will allow for the creation of a social assistance research commission, which will be responsible for recommending social assistance rates and social assistance policy ideas.

I think that involving current or past social assistance recipients on a commission of this type is a positive step. Who knows the struggles and needs of individuals receiving social assistance better than those who have been in their shoes?

I understand that this bill is intended to remove political influence from social assistance rates. However, I'm not convinced that, with this government in power, that will be the outcome. Despite the experts who will most likely make up this commission, there is no obligation for the government to implement their recommendations. We need to look no further than the Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario report to see that this government cherry-picks report recommendations. The Brighter Prospects report was very thorough and very well researched. However, even one of its authors has commented that the government has failed to accept and implement recommendations from this report. Why would we believe the government would treat the recommendations of this commission any differently? Ultimately, the government can still do what it wants, commission or no commission.

Let's look at this government's history when it comes to helping those on social assistance. For me, the first thing that comes to mind is the \$290 million they wasted on SAMS. This new system has caused nothing but problems for caseworkers and social assistance recipients. Just think about how far that money could have gone for those who really needed it. Instead, this government wasted it. They made a decision to go ahead with a system they knew wasn't ready. That's your government at work.

If the goal is to improve the social assistance system, I believe we need to look no farther than the agencies already doing the groundwork that have been making recommendations to this government for years. In Perth-Wellington, we have outstanding organizations with staff who dedicate themselves to improving our communities. We have agencies like the United Way Perth-Huron, our local public health units and their boards, the local community food centre, food banks, churches, poverty action coalitions, and dedicated volunteers in all of these organizations. Many have contacted me to share their recommendations to address poverty and improve social assistance. I have brought these recommendations to the

government's attention time and time again, but we have seen little action.

All this is to say the recommendations are out there. There are organizations in every community in this province that have shared with the government ways to improve social assistance. I say to the members opposite, listen to them. It seems this government has a commission or panel for every issue under the sun, yet somehow their waste, mismanagement and scandals still run rampant. Again, I stress that this government must listen to the advice they're already receiving. They need to stop wasting money on projects that don't work, and actually invest in people who need it. They need to address skyrocketing hydro costs, home heating costs and gasoline costs that are hurting everybody, particularly the most vulnerable in our communities. An 8% reduction in hydro rates is no solution for those who already cannot afford their bills.

Today the government announced their new social assistance rates. While I recognize that every little bit helps, I'm extremely concerned that the expected hydro rate increase in November will eat up most of those extra funds for the recipients. This government gives with one hand and takes with the other.

I noted with interest that the minister's recent mandate letter directs her to develop a practical and implementable plan for social assistance reform. With that in mind, I believe it's very important that this bill pass today so that it can be reviewed in committee as soon as possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Always a pleasure to rise. I want to commend the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek on bringing the issue of poverty before us, because it's very rare that we speak about one of the enduring problems in this province.

I first want to just quickly address some of the minister's comments. He gave the government kudos for ending the clawbacks. What he failed to mention is that it's his government that did the clawbacks. His government did the clawbacks of child support, so to commend themselves for stopping doing the clawbacks—well, yes, I guess it's a step, Madam Speaker, but really, how cynical does one have to be to applaud that?

How cynical does one have to be to applaud a \$25-a-month increase to somebody who makes around \$700 a month to live on—think about it—in a city like Toronto? Now, \$25 extra: What will that get you? I would actually be quite interested in seeing if the minister himself could live on \$700 a month in the city of Toronto.

I can tell you what his life would look like. His life would look like living in a shelter—if he was lucky enough to get a bed. He would certainly be dependent on the kindness of strangers to feed him, because there's no way that he could feed himself. He would be like so many on our streets in the city of Toronto. That used to be considered a national disaster. We've backed away from that. We're now so inured to seeing people sleeping on grates that we step over them rather than talk to them.

But if the minister was living on that money, he'd be one of those people sleeping on one of those grates.

That's what we're condemning people on Ontario Works to. Make no doubt about it: We're condemning them to a life of abject poverty. It's maybe even worse what we do to those on Ontario disability. Ontario Works, by the way—the morality behind this, which is definitely the morality of the 19th century, is that, "Oh, well, they can work." But Madam Speaker, we know there are no jobs. Many people on OW would love to work, but there are no jobs. They can't get a job. That's why they're on OW.

On ODSP, they can't work because they have a disability. So there what we're saying to them—this is the message we're sending them: "If you have a disability, you must live in abject poverty in the province of Ontario." That's the message we're sending to those with a disability.

That is unethical to the highest degree. That is what we're saying. That is what this government is saying to those who live on ODSP. And 1.5%? How cynical do you have to be to think of a 1.5% increase as anything to applaud?

Madam Speaker, our rents in Ontario are allowed to go up almost 3% some years. So we're saying that a landlord's life is more valuable than somebody's who lives on OW or ODSP, and that their property concerns are greater than the concerns for food and shelter and life itself for those who live in abject poverty. And remember that one in four of them are children. We're talking about children that we keep—this government keeps—in abject poverty. That's what we're talking about.

You know, Madam Speaker, I grew up in a Toronto—this is non-partisan—with a Conservative provincial government and a Conservative mayor. I grew up in Toronto on social assistance as a teenager. On social assistance in those days, I was able to go to high school, have a basement apartment and feed myself. That's how far we've come.

There were very few shelters back then, because—guess what?—we didn't need them. We didn't need them. We didn't have food banks back then. I'm old, but I'm not that old; I'm still standing. We didn't have food banks because we didn't need them. You know what the difference is? The difference is the amount we give to those who are on social assistance, or what used to be called welfare. It was called welfare in my day.

I qualified for student welfare because I couldn't live at home and there was no place else for me to go. So the government of the day paid me enough to live—just to live, just to get by, just to do my schooling. That's in part why I'm standing here, able to speak to you today, and have the privilege to represent my community of Parkdale-High Park and in part those people in Ontario, and certainly those people—those 900,000 people—who are now living on Ontario Works or on ODSP.

1500

But now, that same student—I'll tell you what they're doing on social assistance for students now. They're

sleeping on grates. I can tell you that if you walk along Queen Street tonight or along King Street, you'll see one of them, maybe more than one of them. They'll be sitting there, eating McDonald's that somebody has given them, with a cup out, and probably sleeping rough, as it's called in the trade. I did that for a while. I slept in the park out there. They're condemned to sleep in the park out there every night because there is no way, on social assistance now, that you could put yourself in school, that you could pay rent and that you could feed yourself—absolutely no way.

Now, we all remember Campaign 2000. Remember that? We were going to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000. Epic fail. Not because of the people who implemented that, not because of the hard-working activists who wanted to see child poverty eradicated by the year 2000. No. Because government didn't care. They talked a lot, but they didn't care.

Remember 25 in five? Remember that? I remember the bill that this government brought forward, 25 in five. Two pages—it was two pages. It said, "We will decrease poverty by 25% in five years." That's what it said. And five years later—actually, more than five years later now—poverty has gone up by about 25%.

Epic fail. How cynical do you have to be to think that after 13 years, this government is going to really produce anything more? How cynical do you have to be to really look across the aisle and to see that this government—let's face it, anti-poverty activists, social housing activists—let me tell you, they're not going to do anything. Thirteen years later, they're not going to do anything.

Hopefully, they'll pass this bill. Hopefully, this bill will become law. Hopefully, when it becomes law and when they come up with the recommendations, which they will, of raising Ontario Works and ODSP rates so that people can actually live on them—live on them, not luxuriate on them; just live on them—hopefully this government then acts on those recommendations. That's a lot of ifs. It's a lot of hopes.

I can tell you that it's unlikely. It's unlikely. I wish I could say otherwise. I've been here for 10 years and I've seen poverty strategies come and poverty strategies of this government go. Hopefully with this bill, we'll actually get a condition of lived experience and make the recommendations so that the next government—which, hopefully, will be a kinder and gentler government that actually cares about people who live in abject poverty, children who live in abject poverty. Hopefully, we'll get a government that cares about them then.

Here is the kicker: Did you know that it costs less to actually give people on poverty more? Do you know that it costs less? If they were to raise the rates and to build social housing so that every child had a place to live and enough to eat, it would cost them less in the long run. It would. You put money upfront and you see the returns. How do you see the returns? Less trips to the OR, less trips to the justice system, less interventions by governments at every stage of that child's life.

It costs so much to keep in place our system of managing the poor right now. I remember when John

Gerretsen was the housing minister, and I was the housing critic. I said, "It costs \$100 to \$150 a night to keep somebody in a shelter in Toronto. You can stay in a hotel for that. Where is the logic?" He admitted it was true. It's in Hansard. He admitted it was true. How insane is that?

So what do we need to do? We need to put this commission in place. We need to raise the rates. Absolutely raise the rates. It's the only way we're going to save people's lives. We need to build housing, we need to bring in real rent control, we need to bring in rent supplements, we need to fix up the affordable housing we have now, we need to bring in inclusionary zoning, and guess what? It's not rocket science. We don't need another study. Just do it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the minister responsible for seniors affairs.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. In fact, I've just gone over to the minister responsible for poverty reduction because I just wanted to talk to him about the bill I'm speaking to. I want to first begin by thanking the member of provincial Parliament for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for introducing the bill, and all of the members who have spoken to this very important issue.

I do want to take exception with one comment in particular that the MPP for Parkdale–High Park made, which is that we don't discuss poverty issues enough here. The reason I take exception to that is that we actually have a minister dedicated to poverty reduction. What bigger, better signal can a government send than having a minister dedicated to poverty reduction? I suspect that when the NDP was in power here in Ontario, there was no minister for poverty reduction. It's a little rich, coming from that party, to accuse us that somehow poverty reduction isn't important to this party or that it's not important in this Legislature, because we actually happen to have a minister dedicated to it. I challenge the NDP to give me some examples when their government had a minister dedicated to poverty reduction.

That said, I do want to congratulate the member opposite for introducing this bill, because it happens to be a good idea. The only thing is we're already acting on it. The reason I say we are already acting on it is that we have already established an Income Security Reform Working Group—

Mr. Paul Miller: Which is totally useless.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): You know what I said this morning. We need to have respectful debate. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is chattering and shouting across. We're debating your bill, so please be respectful.

I'm going to return to the minister.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I was actually congratulating the member opposite for introducing this bill; I'm only saying that since we're already working on the idea, perhaps he can collaborate with us and work with us on our Income Security Reform Working Group rather than create another level of bloated bureaucracy and create another social assistance research commission when we already have the income security working group.

A fundamental part of the working group's mandate is to recommend a methodology for how rates are to be set and adjusted, which is exactly the issue that I know the member from Parkdale—High Park spoke at length about. The whole point of the Income Security Reform Working Group is to address that issue. I hope that the NDP will support us and work with us on this very, very important issue that we are working on.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I want to say that as the minister responsible for seniors, I'm obviously very concerned about ensuring that our seniors have income security. I have to say that it did occur to me that had somebody like Premier Wynne been the Premier 25 or 30 years ago, she would have brought in something like the ORPP or would have worked with the federal government back then, 25 or 30 years ago, to enhance CPP so that today's seniors would have had the income security that they all deserve and that we all talk about.

It's just something to think about. You know, the fact that this is a Premier who has really shown leadership when it comes to income security. This is a Premier who has shown real leadership when it comes to poverty reduction and continues to look forward to working on this very important issue. The minister responsible for poverty reduction already outlined some of the many important things that we've already done, including, quite frankly, today's announcement this morning that increases social assistance rates.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

1510

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to, and voice my support of, this bill to establish the social assistance research commission. I want to acknowledge my colleague from Perth—Wellington, the critic for our party on community and social services, for all the work he's doing in really looking out and making sure that we're holding the government to account, particularly for the most vulnerable people in our society.

I think government should have a regular and ongoing checkup of the social assistance rates and policies. They need to be scrutinized if they are making life better or worse for those who need these programs.

In the case of the Ontario Liberal government, it need only look at the rising poverty rate for proof that life is harder for Ontarians under their regime. With the rising cost of food, shelter and, of course, energy rates, people all across Ontario are having a difficult time making ends meet every month. No one feels the financial squeeze more than our seniors and people on social assistance, who are also the most vulnerable groups in our communities.

I think it's a shame that a Premier who ran on the promise to be "a force of good in people's lives" is the one who is now forcing one in every 12 households to choose between putting food on the table and heating their home.

Last week, I told you about Nicola Hart from Warton. Nicola burns wood to heat her home and save money, yet

after she pays her monthly bill for electricity and shelter, she comes up short every month.

People on social assistance cannot afford the continually rising electricity rates of the Liberal government. Again, I think it's a shame that this government continues to turn a blind eye to the fact that it's straining everyone's budget and, sadly, decimating the budgets of low- and fixed-income Ontarians.

In contrast, they—the Liberals—are living at the trough, pocketing millions from their lavish \$10,000 fundraising dinners and wasting billions of taxpayer dollars on scandals such as eHealth, Ornge, the power plant cancellations, the smart meter fiasco, and let's not forget the almost \$300 million wasted on SAMS, the flawed welfare case management system designed to help the province's most vulnerable. SAMS was a complete disaster. That \$300 million could have gone towards actually helping the most vulnerable—and should have been—in the form of programs and services.

It's interesting that the government, with the flip of a switch, always finds money to bail out its own scandals, and yet when we ask for money for life-saving drugs for people and children with rare diseases, for special-education assistants in the classroom to help children with disabilities, we get a very quick, "No."

By comparison, the Wynne Liberals are the only ones not feeling the financial squeeze, the hurt. They have never felt offended by their enormous waste of taxpayers' money and by the culture of entitlement that has taken root in their party over the last 13 years.

Do you know the cost of the Ontario Liberals' mismanagement to date? It's \$302 billion; that's our current debt. That's \$12 billion every year in debt payments, interest on our debt. That \$12 billion a year right now that this government spends on interest payments alone could be going towards helping people on social assistance, yet this government is instead looking to set up a commission to tell them how to free up dollars for social assistance.

As my friend Warton Willie would say, without a shadow of a doubt, the Liberal government must stop this wasteful spending and take action in addressing its mismanagement. This would indeed be the best way to free up dollars for social assistance and a myriad of other programs and services to actually make our people's lives much better.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: In the very brief couple of minutes that I have to speak to the bill, I wanted to point out that the debate that has taken place this afternoon reinforces exactly why this bill is so important. We need to take the politics out of social assistance policy discussions.

We have seen a government that made a political decision in 1995 to slash social assistance rates by 21.6%. We have seen a government that has done nothing since they took power in 2003 to restore that reduction. In fact, over the 21 years since those rates were reduced, we've seen a paltry 2.7% increase. In 1995, we had single adults on social assistance who made

\$663 a month; now they make \$681 a month. And we know about the huge increases in the cost of living since that time.

This bill will introduce established rates that are evidence-based, that rely on the opinions of experts, including those with lived experience, because those are the experts on what it means to struggle to survive in poverty.

It will also reflect the realities that the regions in our province are different, that we face different kinds of challenges, different housing costs and all kinds of things that have to be taken into account during rate setting.

The third point that I wanted to make is that it honours the—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. Further debate. I recognize the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very careful to call you "Madam Speaker," because today I've heard a few people say "Mr. Speaker." I'm wondering if we need to have unanimous consent to just say "Speaker," now that we have a Madam Speaker. We're trying to be so gender neutral and so progressive in this province. I'm surprised the government or the NDP haven't been the ones to suggest that, but I see some of my colleagues over there nodding.

I think that we're all concerned about everybody in Ontario, not just people on social assistance. There are a lot of people who are what we call the working poor. The higher cost of electricity—I can't imagine how it is squeezing people, because we all know that social assistance rates are not based on the increases in electricity costs or any other costs. It doesn't necessarily take into account bad weather or things like that. We live in—can I say it?—one of the provinces in the country with a very high standard of living, and there is no reason why we're not able to better support the people who need everybody else's support.

We spoke previously about stroke patients in the province. I had said that if you would ask every taxpayer in the province, they would agree that everybody who has had a stroke should have as much rehabilitation as the medical team needs. I think everybody in the province of Ontario would feel that we should do more and more, as the NDP says, evidence-based work in supporting people who are on social assistance.

We're hearing that one in 12 households is in energy poverty. I'm reminded that many people are on a well system, and if they do not have electricity, they're not even able to pump water from their well. They're not just not having any electricity in their home; they're not having heat and they're also not having any water in many of our rural and remote communities.

I think that we need to have this kind of task force and we need to have these discussions, because it's not just about money. It's also about having initiatives. There are so many applications now that people can use in computers that perhaps people can trade jobs, people can share boarding during the week, because there are very many people who say, "Yes, I can find a job, but it's too far for me to travel. I can't actually get there. I can't

afford the cost of getting there," or "I can't afford the time of getting there," or "It's not near my child's day-care or school." With all the technology there is today, I hope that we can move forward to use that technology, to use people with life experiences and to do more for the most vulnerable in our province. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I'll return to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek to wrap up.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the members from Perth–Wellington, Parkdale–High Park, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, London West and Thornhill.

In reference to the Minister of Housing and reduction of poverty, he read a whole list of things they were doing—a pathetic list of increases they're going to do. He forgot to mention that the present system they've got only talks to the minister; it doesn't talk to the public. In fact, some of the members who are actually on the committee got admonished for telling the public anything because they didn't go through the minister. That was pretty pathetic.

Then, you've got to ask the minister—the other day he was bragging about how he spent a night on the street with a couple of his buddies. He said it only lasted one night because the next night he didn't get any volunteers and he wasn't doing too good. Try it for 365 days a year.

Then, the minister doesn't say anything about the billions of dollars they waste on scandals: Ornge, SAMS and gas plants. They're going to bring in cap-and-trade to clean the air. How about feeding the people and giving them clean drinking water? That might be a good start too. He didn't even listen to the passionate speech from the member from Parkdale–High Park who actually lived some of this experience and it gave us an opportunity in this House for us to really have a first-hand look at what it's all about. But no, they were too busy chatting. It's pathetic what is going on over there.

I'm sorry. I know it's my bill, but I've got to tell the truth. If you're really going to do something, start listening to the people who are going to do something about it and stop listening to yourself.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

1520

TICKET SPECULATION
AMENDMENT ACT
(PURCHASE AND SALE
REQUIREMENTS), 2016
LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LE TRAFIC
DES BILLETS DE SPECTACLE
(EXIGENCES RELATIVES À L'ACHAT
ET À LA VENTE DES BILLETS)

Ms. Kiwala moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act to prohibit the use of ticket purchasing software and to require the listing of a ticket's original purchase price / *Projet de loi 22, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle pour interdire l'utilisation de logiciels de billetterie et exiger l'indication du prix d'achat d'origine des billets.*

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll be sharing the time today with MPP Berardinetti, MPP Naidoo-Harris, MPP Coteau, MPP Potts and MPP McMahon.

Again, I would like to thank you. It's genuinely a privilege and a pleasure to stand and speak to this private member's bill, the second reading of Bill 22, the Ticket Speculation Amendment Act (Purchase and Sale Requirements), 2016.

On August 20, in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, we hosted the final concert of the Tragically Hip's cross-country tour. Devoted Hip fans in my community and across the country were discouraged to discover that tickets to attend one of the last-ever Hip concerts would simply be unattainable. However, the experience of the Hip concert is a story that gets repeated too often by many high-profile entertainment events across the province.

The discouragement and frustration of beloved fans being unable to experience their favourite performers, see their favourite bands and watch their favourite sports teams made me wonder what could be done to protect customers, create fairer access to tickets and ensure that every entertainment experience in Ontario is one worth remembering. Our province has so much to offer in terms of entertainment, from the incredible sports teams like the Ottawa Senators, Toronto Blue Jays and Toronto Raptors to highly anticipated concerts such as Adele, Kanye West and Drake. To say the very least, our province has a thriving entertainment industry.

With so many experiences to enjoy, it is important to ensure that access to these events is fair. With advancements in technology and our heavy reliance on the Internet, we are in an era where virtually everything is done electronically. From online shopping to video streaming to ticket purchasing, the Internet has become a heavily utilized channel for different purchase transactions. The world is literally at our fingertips and only a click away, with access to an overwhelming amount of entertainment and cultural opportunities. With this, however, come new challenges—challenges for consumers, ticket sellers, artists and venues, and there is no doubt that the system is complicated.

Since I began working on this bill, I've received a tremendous amount of support from residents in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, from residents across the province and from the entertainment industry, including provincial and federal associations. I would also like to acknowledge Patti-Anne Tarlton and Kelly Meehan from Music Canada Live. Thank you for being

here. The industry has been very generous with their time and interest in this bill, and I would like to thank you for that.

We have explored how tickets are bought and sold on the primary- and secondary-seller markets. As I dove deeper into the world of ticket selling and purchasing, I have discovered that there is far more than meets the eye, and much of this information is unbeknownst to the average consumer. More often than not, tickets to popular concerts, sporting events, theatre productions and other forms of entertainment become unavailable within moments of being placed online for sale. Fans hoping for a chance to buy tickets will often be well prepared with credit cards and personal information so that the moment that the tickets go on sale, they're able to purchase them very quickly. Instead, they find themselves in a frustrating pattern of refreshing the website repeatedly in attempts to gain access to tickets and process their orders, many receiving a very disappointing message. Tickets are sold out when the purchase page finally shows up.

The use of security bypass software or scalper bots results in ticket resellers having the ability to override the feature that limits the number of tickets that can be bought in one single transaction, a measure implemented by ticket-selling websites in an attempt to discourage mass purchasing of tickets and ensure that access to tickets is fair for customers. When these security protocols are bypassed, ticket resellers are able to purchase as many tickets as they wish and then place them online for sale at exorbitant prices.

There is simply no way in which human ability can surpass how quickly a scalper bot can purchase a large number of tickets in only a few moments. This is an issue that extends beyond my riding of Kingston and the Islands and affects many consumers looking to purchase tickets for a variety of different events.

This bill is not intended to delegitimize the legitimate secondary sellers, and they do have a role to play in the free market. Legitimate secondary sellers pay taxes on their sales. They hire employees, they pay wages and they contribute to the economy. They legitimately purchase blocks of tickets that are provided to them by artists or venues. Sometimes, secondary sellers will buy blocks of seats to an event. The tickets for the primary block of seats are not selling, and they may end up having to sell some tickets at a loss.

The ticket-selling industry is already working hard to protect consumers from fraudulent tickets and actively trying to combat against tickets purchased by scalper bot software. But, as they put it themselves, keeping up with these technological advances is like an arms race. At times, it must feel like for every step forward, there's half a step back. With each advancement in their own technology to stop the scalper bots, new technology is implemented by those who use the technology.

Some venues use paperless ticket transactions to protect consumers. Paperless tickets require that the credit card that was used to purchase the ticket must be displayed at the door upon entry to the event, which can sometimes be difficult for venues to manage logistically.

Other venues require tickets to be available for pick-up right before a highly anticipated show or sports event.

While these solutions help to reduce fraudulent ticket purchasing, they won't eliminate the problem entirely. For example, some tickets are sold months in advance, and a person's credit card might have changed. Tickets bought as a gift can also present a challenge. So while some consumer protection measures will protect consumers against fraudulent tickets, it can impact the consumers' event experience and result in delays entering the facility.

Bill 22, the Ticket Speculation Amendment Act, 2016, is a bill with a very defined focus that will, if passed, prohibit the use of scalper bot software that bypasses security measures used by ticket-selling websites. By prohibiting the use of this technology, this legislation is aimed at leveling the playing field and making ticket purchasing a more fair process for consumers. It is meant to deter those who would use this technology to buy large quantities of tickets for financial gain, while contributing nothing to the industry and nothing to the artist or the venue or the economy of their community.

As an additional consumer protection measure, this bill would also require that the original purchase price be disclosed if a ticket is being resold. Consumers will have a clearer idea of the markup they would be paying when they purchase tickets through secondary sellers. It increases the transparency in the ticket-buying process and ensures Ontarians are well educated about the extent of the increase that they are paying.

These amendments are meant to build upon the Ticket Speculation Act, 1990, and the amendments made to the act in 2015. Several major American states have introduced clear rules to protect the rights of consumers. New York is home to one of the most active and valuable event ticket markets in the world, and was previously one of the most restrictive in the United States for ticket resale. New York has implemented similar anti-bot legislation to fight against the same ticket-purchasing practices that are happening right here in Ontario.

1530

Ticket selling is a complex process that involves many different stakeholders, and the structure for ticket selling can range, depending on the event.

This bill is meant to continue the hard work that we are doing to address the issues within the ticket-buying and ticket-selling industry.

Like most technologies, scalper bots become smarter and smarter every day. We should not, however, let this hamper our attempts to ensure that anyone in Ontario who wants to purchase a ticket to an event can do so in a marketplace that is fair, transparent and accessible.

Through a combination of prohibiting bots and increased consumer awareness, this bill intends to create a more informed customer base that is familiar with the ticket-buying process, the risk of fraudulent tickets, the difference between primary and secondary sellers, and how to exercise safety when purchasing tickets.

I'm extremely pleased to be presenting this private member's bill and I am hopeful that it will result in fair

access for anyone looking to purchase tickets to cultural events and entertainment in our province.

I encourage anyone who is interested in supporting this bill, and who would like to see it come forward to committee, to sign the petition that will be posted on my website and social media, as well as write to the committee Chair.

I urge all members to vote in favour of this bill. Again, please, everyone who is listening, remember to encourage your MPPs to bring this back to the House in the form of a petition.

Thank you, everyone, for listening today. Thank you for the stakeholders who were able to be present today. It really is an honour to bring forward your concerns in this Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I recognize you too.

This is a difficult situation. At heart here we have two conflicting positive Conservative principles. First is the belief in private property and that someone who has legally purchased something has a legal right to resell it. On the other hand, I know that capitalism only functions well when we have consumers who are well-informed and reacting to real market forces and not contorted ones. Consumers who are well-informed are not only essential to capitalism, but it can't exist without them.

Right now, in the primary and secondary ticket-resale market, getting tickets is a bit like playing cards in a casino. By that, I mean the odds are always with the house. You simply can't get the tickets because you can't beat the bots, Madam Speaker, and that's what this bill is about.

I commend the member from Kingston and the Islands for bringing this bill forward. I'm actually a little bit perturbed that she brought it forward because it's a bill that I had drafted, on my desk, up in Room 416 here, that I was going to debate this fall, but the member from Kingston and the Islands beat me to it. So congratulations to her on that one. I guess I've got to work on something else for a ballot day.

Interjection.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm sure that the Minister of Agriculture has some good ideas.

This is exactly what the New York Attorney General meant last year when he said, "Ticketing, to put it bluntly, is a fixed game." I think we all agree that that's the case. It's time that we enacted some serious bot legislation in Ontario.

While criminalizing the use of the technology for ticket purchases is a good start, I believe that we have to go beyond that. The member did mention some other things in her speech that aren't necessarily included in the legislation that she's put forward, but I think we have to tackle all of these issues.

We know that there are some resellers out there who operate bots and couldn't do their business without them,

but there are also companies who are selling them to brokers and scalpers too.

The first amendment that I would offer to the member opposite for consideration when the bill makes it to committee is extending the ban to the purchase, sale and ownership of bots software as well.

Ticketmaster told the New York Attorney General that spinner or drop checker bots account for as much as 90% of the traffic to its website. These bots monitor ticketing websites constantly to detect the release of tickets.

Ticketmaster told the Australian government that they do track credit cards that make a lot of purchases.

It's also frequently not the case that the credit card numbers being used by bots are procured through illegal means. As the UK report points out, this activity by bots is already illegal by means of existing credit card fraud statutes. That's true here in Canada as well, Madam Speaker. Section 380, clause 2, of the Criminal Code states as follows:

"Every one who, by deceit, falsehood or other fraudulent means, whether or not it is a false pretence within the meaning of this act, with intent to defraud, affects the public market price of stocks, shares, merchandise or anything that is offered for sale to the public is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years."

The UK report highlights the fact that while these criminal statutes exist, and while both sellers and resellers often track suspected bot usage, these bots are rarely reported to authorities. More specifically, as the bots may be operated beyond the jurisdiction or outside the province or state where the tickets are sold, relevant credit-card-fraud statutes become pretty hard for officials to enforce. That's why it never gets dealt with.

Both the Australian and New York studies highlight the use of CAPTCHA technology, visual testing software employed by sellers to combat bots. Both studies highlight the fact that companies know the technology has only a limited effectiveness and can often be avoided through the use of mobile technology. This is attributed to the fact that primary sellers are more interested in selling tickets than they actually are in who the tickets are being sold to.

The UK report also goes into detail about better technologies that are currently available to combat bots, including one called Yoti. While these technologies are more expensive and will result in slightly higher ticket costs, they are much more effective at combatting bots.

If I could, I'd actually like to quote a comedian, Louis C.K., about how he combats scalpers. He says, "That's their currency. And they sit there—it's like a commodity. They mark it up and up and up as the show gets closer. And all we did was not tell anybody when it was going on sale.

"We also hired two people who used to be scalpers, who figured out credit card patterns, and whenever we find a ticket that was bought by a scalper, we contact them and we tell them this ticket has been moved to Will Call, which means you have to show up in person as the ticket buyer with the credit card to pick up the ticket.

You can't print it at home. And so that ruins that person's ability to sell it."

We also need to deal with the fact that there are practices at the primary seller level that need to be fixed, as well. Most people, when they go to the Ticketmaster website for a general sale, believe that a large majority of the tickets available for the venue are going on sale. That's not the case, Madam Speaker. We now know that that's not the case. Oftentimes, more than half the venue is already spoken for between presale tickets and promotional tickets. While fans may think that, say, 16,000 tickets are going on sale for the Adele show at the Air Canada Centre or that 30,000 are going on sale at the SkyDome, or the Rogers Centre, in reality, half of that number of tickets may actually be going on sale. The other half may have already been spoken for through these other presales.

In a way, the business model relies on the customer not knowing that. It relies on all of us thinking that we can get one of the 16,000 Adele tickets, because if we knew that we were really trying to get half of that, or even less than half of that—say 8,500—more of us might avoid the main ticket window and go to secondary sellers, or simply not go to the concert at all. After all, we are the demand side of the economy.

I would propose that we include an amendment that requires primary sellers to post on their website how many tickets are actually available when a sale to the general public opens. That way, consumers can decide whether they actually want to devote their time and money when the odds are not in their favour—they're in the favour of the house, as I said earlier.

Another practice that has to be addressed is presales. On their own, the idea of presales isn't a bad thing. It's a way of helping to ensure that members of fan clubs are able to get priority access to tickets. I know that the member from Kingston and the Islands has a special affinity for The Tragically Hip, as I do—and they have a very, very big fan club, so there are a lot of them who would want to get first access to the tickets, and that's a good thing. But other presales are extended to holders of particular credit cards. As a result, this activity incentivizes bots in this industry. The bots are used to harvest certain types of credit cards so that they can be utilized not just in the general sale, but also in the presale of tickets.

I'm sure there are members of this House who, for example, wanted to go see Bruce Springsteen—the Boss—when he was in Toronto back in February. Days before those tickets went on general sale, tickets were being offered for resale by secondary seller sites and ticket brokers who had gotten hundreds of tickets because of scalpers exploiting the presale.

1540

Going back to the Louis C.K. quote that I used earlier, what he's talking about are things that the government could enforce across the sector, and they should. Many artists advocate for the use of paperless, non-transferable tickets for their concerts as a way of combatting scalpers. While I'm not sure we need to extend the use of the

technology to the general sale of tickets in this province, we should certainly compel its use for presales here.

That's because in order to be eligible for the presale, you have to belong to one of the two categories, as I mentioned above. If you're a member of a fan club, you're going to the show and the kind of ticket you have probably doesn't bother you that much; you just want to have a ticket. If you hold a particular credit card and that's how you qualified for the presale, that card has to become your paperless non-transferable ticket when you show up at the venue.

The only people that could possibly oppose requiring paperless non-transferable tickets being used for presale tickets in Ontario are people who either belong to a fan club as a way of getting access to presales rather than actually going to see a show, or people who hold a credit card for the express purpose of gaining access to the presales rather than going to see the shows—in other words, people who intend to scalp the tickets.

I think you'll find that there's probably going to be support for this bill, enough support to get it to committee. But if I could just run through, again, the amendments I'd like to see to the bill for the member opposite:

(1) Extending the ban on bots to the purchase, sale and ownership of bot software;

(2) An amendment that requires primary sellers to post on their website how many tickets are actually available when a sale to the general public opens, for more transparency;

(3) Requiring that the presales of tickets for events in Ontario are conducted only using paperless non-transferable tickets;

(4) An amendment that remits any ticket that was purchased using bot software to the primary seller for resale; and

(5) In the event that a ticket purchased using bot software has already been resold to a third party, that the secondary seller be responsible for providing a refund in full to the final purchasing party.

I look forward to the member's bill getting to committee and supporting it, and talking more about these amendments when we do get to committee. Congratulations to her for bringing this forward. I'm a little upset she got to present it and not me, Madam Speaker, but I wish her well in the committee process and thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity today to speak to this private member's bill which seeks to address the problem of high-priced reselling of tickets. I appreciate that the member was motivated by the experience of many fans all across the country who wanted to see her hometown heroes, the Tragically Hip, on their final tour. It was a remarkable experience for Canadians everywhere. Additional tour dates were scheduled due to high ticket demand and communities gathered to stream the final show aired by

CBC. In Hamilton, thousands gathered at Gage Park to watch the event.

For most fans, however, scoring tickets for a live show on the tour was impossible. Fans were frustrated, not just because too many other fans wanted tickets, but because ticket-buying software took up most of the tickets.

Speaker, I love what computers can do for me. In many ways, they make my life so much easier. But there's also ways that allow people to take advantage of the system and ruin it for others. That is exactly what has happened again. In this case, true fans were squeezed out of the ticket market by companies using ticket bots to snap up all the tickets before consumers had a chance to get them—I'm talking within seconds of them being available.

Of course, this isn't an isolated incident. It happens regularly for various performances and sporting events, and consumers are being ripped off left, right, and centre. When I hear those stories, that is when I really value that I'm a season ticket holder for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, because I pay the listed price for the year and I get to see all of the games, no matter whether the event is sold out or not.

Too often, consumers either can't get a ticket or they have to pay many times over their face value. Tickets for the Hip were going for \$3,000 in the secondary market created by these ticket bots. What a tragedy for the fan of arts, culture, and sport. High-demand acts and teams have become a privilege afforded by those who can pay the exorbitant prices.

The Hip tickets were resold to fans with deep pockets for up to 10 times their face value, and it happened legally—yes, that's right, legally, and that's thanks to this Liberal government.

Before 2015, reselling tickets, otherwise known as scalping, was illegal online and offline. But that changed last year when the government changed the regulations in the Ticket Speculation Act. Scalping has been a problem for a long time. Many in the entertainment industry—I'm sure there are some here today—have worked really hard to try to stop the illegal activity.

Rather than seriously looking at ways to protect consumers, the Liberal government decided that the best way to stop people from breaking the law was to change the law. These changes allowed scalpers to resell tickets for a profit online, with very few stipulations. That opened the door to the big players in the business with sophisticated software. Once again, we see this Liberal government looking after a select few at the expense of the consumer.

Bill 22 includes two main provisions. First, it prohibits the use of software that allows for mass purchasing of tickets. Second, it requires sellers to disclose the face value of tickets to potential buyers.

On the surface, it appears to do some good things for consumer protection. However, if we look a little closer at the problem, it might only scratch the surface. If we are going to get serious about consumer protection, we should probably look at the amendments enacted in July 2015 when this government, in all of their wisdom,

changed the act, allowing a secondary reseller market to legally exist in the first place.

As I said, the bill may not go far enough to address these factors actually impacting the shortage of tickets available to genuine buyers. Mass purchasing software is used all over the world. The Attorney General of New York state has taken a look at what happens with tickets for the top-selling shows in New York. In his report, he said that fewer than half of the tickets sold are available to the general public. I don't know what the numbers are in Toronto or Ontario, but given the global nature of the business, I would be surprised if they are greatly different than New York. I've heard arguments being made that this is about supply and demand, but when supply is being manipulated, the end result is gouging the consumers.

We also have a federal Competition Act that prohibits the sale of a product at a greater price than the advertised price, the sticker price. Consumers deserve to know how many tickets are available to them and what the fair price is. When the government was looking at these regulations last year, they should have had the consumer at the front of their mind. Given what we see today, that clearly wasn't the case. This bill attempts to right this wrong, and I commend the member for Kingston and the Islands for trying to fix her own party's shortfalls. The legalization of the reseller market is where the issue starts, and that's what the government needs to address.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm pleased to rise today and support this bill being brought forward by the member from Kingston and the Islands. I'd like to applaud her work on this issue and thank her for raising awareness of a matter that's affecting a growing number of Ontarians.

I've been hearing from far too many residents of Scarborough Southwest and elsewhere that these days, attending a concert or a sporting event or even a theatre production has simply become unaffordable. Not only are tickets becoming increasingly expensive, but their availability, even mere minutes after going on sale, can oftentimes be non-existent.

I'm sure we all remember the headlines that brought this issue to the forefront this past summer when the Tragically Hip set out for their farewell tour. What should have been a celebration of music and of Canada itself became overshadowed by countless stories of fans being unable to get tickets, of passionate music lovers being gouged by greed.

1550

While these particular shows may have generated the most headlines, the underlying problem is certainly not restricted to the Hip. Being able to enjoy world-class entertainment with your family or friends is one of the things that makes Ontario so great. Everyone should have an opportunity to see a band like the Hip or teams like the Blue Jays, the Raptors and the Maple Leafs and so on without being gouged. Right now, that simply isn't the

case, and it's largely due to practices this bill is aiming to prevent.

Again, I commend the member for doing this today and taking this forward step. This is a problem that needs to be fixed. That's why I'm happy to stand and speak in support of this bill. I look forward to hearing the rest of this debate on this very important issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: In my short time, I want to mention that, very often, bills address a problem—but they could address multiple problems. We debate bills and we have committee hearings, and many times there could be so much more to it.

Of course, we're all concerned about people being part of some kind of scam. It's not just the consumers here. What about the artists? I think we all remember Napster—or at least I remember Napster. The artists felt that they were losing revenue and that it was going to be the end of the music industry. Well, it was dealt with, and I think the artists feel that things are much fairer now, with iTunes and different things like that.

We all see that we're asked for a code when we purchase something online or try to log into a website. It will sometimes even say, "Is this a real person?" and you have to do the little puzzle and do the code. I'm wondering if maybe something like that can be come up with, so that people who purchase tickets online—even if it's group tickets—are sent some kind of code that they have to log in with in order to actually use that ticket.

The technology is so fantastic, but we're always chasing and chasing, because, unfortunately, the hackers and the scammers are always one step ahead of us.

Hopefully we can get this to committee, broaden it to include other issues as well and get moving on this front.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, thank you very much. I appreciate being recognized. I want to thank the member for bringing forward this bill.

There's no doubt that people who have been stung by speculators, people who have wanted to go to football games or to the shows put on by the Tragically Hip, and those who went to see Hamilton on Broadway in New York City have all felt the incredible sting of a very parasitic operator who has bought those tickets, bought them at the going price, and been able to crank up the price quite dramatically.

It's been said today that some of the tickets for the Tragically Hip concert went for \$3,000. I'm sure that's the case. I've heard quotes that the musical Hamilton in New York City has had ticket prices pumped up to \$2,000 per ticket. So there's no question in my mind that dealing with predatory speculators who use IT to corner those tickets, command a large chunk of them and then resell them at outrageous rates is something that has to be dealt with.

My colleague from Hamilton Mountain noted that the reason we're dealing with a lot of these problems is

because last summer, in 2015, the Liberal government changed the act so that scalping became legal. In fact, there was concern—the Toronto Star reported last October that there would be huge potential problems here because this practice was not being dealt with through the regular system of the enforcement of laws. The Liberals opened things up and, not surprisingly, a smaller practice—problematic, speculative, predatory—became a large-scale practice run by very big businesses.

What the member is attempting to do with this act is change the situation, the ground rules, so that there's less speculation and less predation. I hope that she is successful because, in fact, this is needed.

The member from Prince Edward—Hastings made a far more informed speech than I am making and went through, in detail, some of the amendments that he wanted to bring forward to actually strengthen this bill. I thought that his comments were very useful. I think that the member from Kingston, who introduced the bill, is probably going to be extraordinarily friendly to those amendments, because they took your act, which is a good foundation for coming to grips with this, and enhanced it.

I actually have to say that I think it would be worthwhile going back to the situation before the Liberals liberalized this whole matter and simply make scalping illegal and put in the resources necessary to deal with it. Frankly, having someone simply squat on a ticket and demand a ransom in order for people to be able to go to the performance or go to the game is something that is totally unproductive in this society. What actual work is done by those who corner the market on these tickets? What actual value or wealth is created in society? There's none. They have simply come in and made sure that they were able to gain enough control so that people who badly wanted to see that game, that performance, that show, had to go through them.

In some ways, it's reminiscent of what's going on with the bottled water industry here in Ontario, where water-bottlers are trying to control wells so that if people want to drink water, they have to go through them. A friend of mine is working in the southwestern United States, dealing with companies and speculators who are moving in there, where, because of the drought, water, which was already difficult to access, has become far more difficult to access. The potential is there for rewriting chunks of the economy in the American Southwest because those speculators have stepped in, gotten hold of water rights and now are prepared to exact a very big price for anyone to get at that at all.

I know that tickets and water rights are very different things. Entertainment, people can live without; water, they can't live without. But the fundamental principle that speculation and predatory control of the market is something that hurts us at every level of our lives, from the most profound need for water to one of the most enjoyable and emotional needs for entertainment, for experiences that speak to us in a very fundamental way, is similar. In the end, you have people who get in between buyers and sellers and make money off of those people who have the demand and who need the access.

I hope that this bill goes through, I hope it goes to committee and I hope it gets amended. But I hope, in the long run, more profoundly, that scalping is simply banned in this province and that the government does what it should have done in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today in support of the member from Kingston and the Islands' bill, Bill 22, the Ticket Speculation Amendment Act. This is a great initiative. It will help protect Ontario consumers by putting strong restrictions on those trying to take advantage of the ticketing system and of consumers.

Many of us have been in a position where we're ready and waiting online to buy tickets for our favourite band or performer, only to be disappointed when they're sold out almost instantly. Well, it seems unfair, and I think it is. In part, it's due to the popularity of the performer. But with today's technology, we also know that a significant number of those tickets simply vanish because they're being mass-purchased by people planning to resell them at an inflated price.

Legitimate ticket sellers put limits in place to prevent this, but secondary sellers are using software that bypasses security measures. They bypass the legitimate system, and regular folks actually lose.

Bill 22 restricts the use of this software. It will prevent this from happening and it will allow people to get a fair chance to buy a ticket to their favourite show. Not only would these restrictions hinder those sellers that try to take advantage of people, but it would give the general public a much better chance because the pool of available tickets will be bigger.

This bill would also create a penalty deterrent. If convicted of using this security bypass software, an individual could face a \$50,000 fine and a year in jail, and a corporation could face a fine of up to \$250,000.

Another important piece to Bill 22 is the requirement that a secondary seller who offers a ticket for sale must make sure that the original purchase price of the ticket is listed in the offer. This is crucial information for the public and will go a long way towards reducing price gouging of consumers.

1600

Everyone deserves a fair chance to see their favourite band. In fact, the need for those amendments was highlighted most recently, as we heard, when Canada's beloved band, the Tragically Hip—who are of course from MPP Kiwala's riding of Kingston—announced their final tour. The tickets went on sale, but within moments they were gone. Those who weren't able to buy them first-hand could later find them online through secondary sellers but at an exorbitant price that I'm sure many people couldn't afford. That's unacceptable.

Bill 22 would help prevent further experiences like this. It would give regular folks a fair chance to see their favourite band, like the bands themselves intended. I am happy to support Bill 22, and the MPP from Kingston and the Islands on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's my pleasure to stand today to debate Bill 22. I want to thank the member from Kingston and the Islands for this great piece of proposed legislation.

When I think about the prices that tickets are offered at these days—even directly from the seller, but more so through a third party, a scalper—they've become so expensive for families. It has become so expensive for parents to take their children out to enjoy Sunday afternoon theatre, go to a game or go to the movies. It's become very expensive, and we're finding it more in Toronto. There's even a second level of elite tickets for some very specific shows that are just so expensive. Families can't even afford to get out. As the minister responsible for children and youth, I always think we should look for ways to make tickets more affordable, and I think this bill, Bill 22, is a step in the right direction.

We know that, in many cases, the artists don't agree with the prices. I remember when, back probably a decade ago—even more, perhaps—Pearl Jam moved forward with trying to regulate and they got into a big debate with a couple of companies they were working with to keep their tickets under a certain price. They actually looked for ways to keep those prices down, even on merchandise and things like that. If we can find ways to make tickets more affordable for young people, so that they can get out—it wasn't that long ago when you could go out to see a game and it would cost a family \$60, \$70 or \$80. Now it's gone three, four, five times that amount.

I know that this bill will move towards regulating the way in which these bots work. I know that in New York—I know there was some mention of New York—the Auditor General out there identified a bot that had the ability to buy over a thousand U2 tickets in one minute. They're released and, in one minute, a thousand tickets are picked up. There was another bot that, in one day, was able to buy 15,000 tickets for U2, as well.

We know that some of those tickets that were offered by the Tragically Hip went from \$95 originally and ended up being \$5,000 or \$6,000. We want to look for ways to keep those prices down, open up affordability and allow for families to get out there and really appreciate and participate in events across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'd also like to thank my colleague from Kingston and the Islands for bringing this bill forward. I'm going to do something a little different today. I want to quote from my constituency office worker, James Jennings, who is both a constituent and he works in my constituency office. He used to go tour with Pearl Jam and a bunch of other bands, participating in the fan experience. He knows a lot of what he's talking about with regard to this kind of legislation, so I'd like to quote him and what he has to say about it, so he can participate directly in this debate today.

Mr. Jennings says, "The proposed ticket-purchasing amendments being proposed by MPP Kiwala will provide increased consumer protection for Ontarians trying to access sports, entertainment and the arts on a level playing field.

"The dramatic increase in scalper bot software is preventing everyday consumers from accessing event tickets in a fair and timely manner.

"Scalper bots allow ticket resellers to bypass certain security measures, such as CAPTCHAs, allowing the software to gain access to multiple purchase windows before the average consumer can even access a purchase page.

"Ticket resellers using scalper bots can establish numerous accounts generating hundreds of event tickets in advance of the average Ontario consumer.

"By bypassing certain security measures, scalper bot software can gain instant access to purchasing, while average consumers must follow protocol taking up valuable time the bots have sidestepped.

"Resellers using scalper bots can also create numerous accounts to purchase far more event tickets than the allotted amount per consumer.

"This greatly impedes ticket inventory, further limiting the amount of event tickets available to Ontario consumers."

For instance, the Blue Jays post-season tickets went on sale Thursday at 10 a.m. James had two friends and a family member trying to purchase tickets, and the earliest time that they could purchase tickets opened at 10:28 a.m., at which time thousands of tickets were already available on the secondary market for hundreds of dollars more than face value.

I appreciate his contribution to this debate, and I'll turn it over to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I'm delighted to join with colleagues on all sides of the House and on behalf of my colleague the member of Kingston and the Islands to speak to Bill 22. I'm very pleased that the member has presented this bill. It's a good discussion for us to be having. I want to note—and I know that my colleague knows too; she was the former parliamentary assistant in this ministry—that Ontario's festivals and events attract tourists, create jobs and support economic growth. Every year, festivals and events in Ontario support over tens of thousands of jobs and generate millions of dollars in revenue.

Since 2003, our government has invested over \$350 million to support more than 5,600 festivals, events, live concerts, and live music and sporting events across Ontario through a number of tourism and culture programs. Since the inception of the Celebrate Ontario program in 2007, we've committed more than \$153 million to more than 1,900 events across Ontario.

Speaker, this bill is really important because it's critical that visitors and Ontarians alike have fair access to festivals and events in Ontario, including and especially live music events and sporting events. What the member is doing is having a discussion about fairness, transparency, quality of life and economic contributions, all of which are important pieces to my ministry. Ensuring that there is increased transparency and fairness in

ticket sales will help improve access to all of the great events that Ontario has to offer, while continuing to be a major economic driver for our province.

Thank you for this opportunity, Speaker. I urge everyone to pass this important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Now we return to the member for Kingston and the Islands for her reply.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to acknowledge all of the speakers today on this side of the House: Scarborough Southwest, the member for Halton, the member for Don Valley East, and the members for Beaches–East York and Burlington. Thank you all for speaking on the bill.

On the opposition side, I'm very thankful for the words from the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. I have to apologize for scooping your idea. I know how it feels. I've had it happen to me already a number of times in the short time that I've been here. I do understand, and I look forward to working with you in the future on your amendments. I'm happy to hear that you have some great ideas about that.

I would also very much like to thank, on the third party side, the member from Hamilton Mountain—also the member from Thornhill—and, back to the third party, the member from Toronto–Danforth.

I think, from the words that we've heard here today, that there is a lot of support on this bill. I'm pleased to see that we've got some stakeholders here. I know that we've got a number of people watching in Kingston and the Islands. Thank you to Dan Couture for watching, and to the others. I can't be happier that I've been given this opportunity to be able to build on the Ticket Speculation Act, 1990, and the amendments that we brought forward in 2015. As has been said, this is about building more capacity within the system, providing more of an opportunity for more people to purchase tickets.

It is a complicated issue. As I mentioned previously, I've gained a lot of knowledge through this process, and I think that it is much more nuanced than many people think. I do look forward to continuing to work with the industry to make sure that this bill is as accurate and on the mark as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

END AGE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST
STROKE RECOVERY PATIENTS ACT,
2016

LOI DE 2016 VISANT À METTRE FIN
À LA DISCRIMINATION FONDÉE
SUR L'ÂGE ENVERS LES MALADES
SE RÉTABLISSANT D'UN ACCIDENT
VASCULAIRE CÉRÉBRAL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We will first deal with ballot item number 4, standing in the name of Mr. Coe.

Mr. Coe has moved second reading of Bill 9, An Act to amend the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Whitby–Oshawa.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Social Policy, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it agreed? Agreed.

MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND
SOCIAL SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT
(SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RESEARCH
COMMISSION), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES
SOCIAUX ET COMMUNAUTAIRES
(COMMISSION DE RECHERCHE
SUR L'AIDE SOCIALE)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Miller has moved second reading of Bill 6, An Act to amend the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act to establish the Social Assistance Research Commission.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will deal with this vote after we've finished with the other business.

TICKET SPECULATION
AMENDMENT ACT
(PURCHASE AND SALE
REQUIREMENTS), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LE TRAFIC
DES BILLETS DE SPECTACLE
(EXIGENCES RELATIVES À L'ACHAT
ET À LA VENTE DES BILLETS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Ms. Kiwala has moved second reading of Bill 22, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act to prohibit the use of ticket purchasing software and to require the listing of a ticket's original purchase price. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I look to the member for Kingston and the Islands. Which committee would you like to send this to?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: General government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Agreed? Agreed.

There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1613 to 1618.

MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND
SOCIAL SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT
(SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RESEARCH
COMMISSION), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES
SOCIAUX ET COMMUNAUTAIRES
(COMMISSION DE RECHERCHE
SUR L'AIDE SOCIALE)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Will the members please take their seats.

Mr. Miller has moved second reading of Bill 6, An Act to amend the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act to establish the Social Assistance Research Commission. All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Norm
Anderson, Granville	Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia
Baker, Yvan	Hardeman, Ernie	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Hatfield, Percy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Natyshak, Taras
Chan, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Pettapiece, Randy
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Leal, Jeff	Potts, Arthur
Coe, Lorne	MacCharles, Tracy	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Malhi, Harinder	Sattler, Peggy
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Singh, Jagmeet
Delaney, Bob	Mantha, Michael	Smith, Todd
Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Martow, Gila	Taylor, Monique
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	Vanthof, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milczyn, Peter Z.	Walker, Bill

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 48; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the standing orders, this bill is referred to the committee of the whole—the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, social policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is seeking the consent of the House to send this bill to the social policy committee. Agreed? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I need to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mrs. Martow assumes ballot item number 25 and Mr. Hardeman assumes ballot item number 53.

VISITORS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton on a point of order.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you for the indulgence. I invite all members of this House to join me in welcoming two friends who are here visiting, one from England and one originally from Norway, now living in Toronto: Manraj Othi and Kiran Basra. Please welcome them to the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's technically not a point of order, but we welcome you to the Legislature nonetheless.

FLOODING IN WINDSOR
AND TECUMSEH

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Housing.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'm just rising on a point of order to recognize—and I'm not sure of all the details, but the mayor of Windsor is in the process of delivering a state of emergency in that area. Our thoughts are certainly with the families and that community.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROMOTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING
ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROMOTION
DU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 28, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to amend or repeal various Acts with respect to housing and planning / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui concerne le logement et l'aménagement du territoire.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 7 because Ontario is facing a housing crisis. The government has talked about the need to address affordable housing, but every year the problem gets worse.

Every year, the waiting list for affordable housing hits a new record high. It is now at 171,360 families. That's an increase of 45,257 families since 2003. To put this in perspective, that increase is bigger than the number of people in any community in my riding. It's about four times the size of Ingersoll. It's three times the size of Tillsonburg. It's more than twice the size of Huntsville. It's almost three times the size of Thorold. It's almost twice the size of Grimsby. It is more than the entire population of Timmins. Let me be clear: That's just the increase of the waiting list.

Not only is the list bigger every year, but the wait times for every single category have increased. In 2003, seniors were waiting 2.5 years for affordable housing. Now that has almost doubled, to 4.4 years.

The government may not want to admit that there is a crisis any more than they want to admit that we are facing a hydro crisis. But those 171,000 families are telling them there is a problem. That parents are commuting three or four hours every day because they can't afford a home near their job is a sign that there's a problem. That many kids are still living at home in their twenties and thirties because they can't afford any other options is a sign that there is a problem. Municipal politicians from across Ontario are telling this government that there is a problem.

When the new housing minister announced money for York region, regional chair Wayne Emmerson responded with, "Mr. Minister, we're going to be asking for more." So in this, my leadoff, I want to start talking about the current state of housing in Ontario, then inclusionary zoning generally, and finally point out some of the specific problems with Bill 7.

Before I do that, I want to take a moment to recognize the work of the member from Parkdale–High Park, who I don't believe has been recognized yet during this debate of the bill. She has brought forward numerous bills on inclusionary zoning and persevered with the government. I don't believe we would be having this debate today if it weren't for her efforts and I want to commend her for them.

Affordable housing is an issue that has been raised repeatedly by the third party and our caucus over the last few years. We've all seen the media reports of the cost of housing in the GTA, Ottawa and Hamilton. In cities such as Barrie, Innisfil, and Bradford West Gwillimbury, there have been double-digit price increases.

The Toronto Real Estate Board recently reported that the average price of all homes sold in August was \$710,410. To put that in perspective, the mortgage payments on that house would be \$4,131.78 a month, or \$49,581 a year. That's more than a lot of people make. Even the average price of a condo is now \$489,914, putting it out of reach for many people. Most people could never dream of being able to afford a detached home, which is now an average of \$1.2 million.

The cost of housing isn't just a Toronto problem. The average cost of a house in Hamilton and Burlington is almost \$500,000, up 11.4% since last year. Across Ontario, housing prices increased 12.8% from May 2015 to May 2016, according to the Canadian Real Estate Association. That is higher than the increase in any other province except British Columbia.

As AMO said in their submission for the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, "The cost of housing is taking a toll on families and communities across Ontario, pushing both personal debt and housing wait-lists to record levels."

They are not the only organization that has rung alarm bells. The International Monetary Fund issued a warning

about Canada's overheated housing market and household debt levels.

Just recently, the head of the International Monetary Fund met with the Prime Minister and discussed housing. It was interesting that she made it clear that this is not a nationwide problem. It is a regional problem impacting areas like Toronto, Hamilton and other municipalities in the Golden Horseshoe. This is not solely an Ontario problem, but instead of implementing policies to make it better, this government is actually putting forward policies which make it worse. Bill 7 does nothing to change that.

The TD Economics report released on August 15, 2016, found that most of the price pressures in Canadian real estate continue to be driven by markets in Ontario and BC. Not including those two provinces, Canadian real estate prices were actually down 0.2% year over year. As the cost of housing has increased, more and more families who used to be able to afford housing on their own now require support.

Last week, I met with the Ontario Association of Food Banks, who found that the average food bank client spends over 70% of their monthly income on housing.

While there has been much discussion about the million-dollar homes in Toronto, the problem is not just with houses. Renters are facing affordability challenges too. The last estimate is that 42% of renters spend more than the recommended 30% of their income on rent.

Development charges, hydro costs and now inclusionary zoning are all costs that the landlord has to pay, which ultimately get passed on to the renter. These policies also discourage developers from building new rental units, limiting supply in the market. As these developers will tell you, they're still building rental units; they're just not building them in Ontario.

This government has made decision after decision that drives up the price of housing and the cost of living in Ontario, and not once have they stopped to look at the cumulative impact on housing. Allowing development charges on more items, restrictive land use policies, a second land transfer tax, spiralling increases in the cost of hydro, and now inclusionary zoning—all of those are decisions that drive up the cost of homes and mean fewer people can afford housing without some form of assistance. Individually, some of these decisions, such as land use planning, have merit, but this government has never bothered to look at the total impact.

1630

We cannot talk about housing affordability without talking about the impact of hydro increases on the cost of living. In just over a year, family budgets have been hit five times with hydro increases: On May 1, 2015, there was an increase that was estimated to cost the average family \$68 a year. On November 1, 2015, there was another increase, this one estimated to cost \$53 a year. Then, on January 1, the Ontario Electricity Support Program began, which cost the average family \$11.16 a year. And the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit was repealed, costing families \$153.60. Five months later, on May 1,

there was another increase, this one costing families \$37.56. Even subtracting the debt retirement charge, it adds up to \$250 more that the average family is paying for hydro, compared to just over a year ago. Is it any wonder that people are having trouble affording housing? Is it any wonder that landlords who have to pay those costs are being forced to increase the rents? Is it any wonder that developers are looking at building in other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker?

Over the last 10 years, the price of off-peak hydro has gone up two and a half times, to 8.7 cents. On-peak, it is now a whopping 18 cents a kilowatt hour. One person told me in an email last week, "Thanks to this Liberal government's waste, cronyism and mismanagement, we are paying two mortgages, one to the bank and another one to the hydro company." Another email said, "Opened my bill today and it was over \$800! That's almost a mortgage payment! I live within Ingersoll and my delivery was \$150."

Person after person told us that they are struggling to make ends meet because of the cost of hydro, and this government refuses to listen. If they believe that an 8% rebate is going to solve the problem, it's clear they don't understand how much hydro bills have increased in Ontario. If they think that stopping a future \$2-a-month increase on an \$800 bill is going to solve the problem, it's clear they don't understand the impact on family budgets. Energy poverty is a huge issue in Ontario and a huge affordability factor, but Bill 7, the affordable housing omnibus bill, does nothing to address it.

Bill 7 also failed to address the red tape that is adding to the cost of housing. "The president of the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) says one of the biggest barriers to the development of more affordable housing in this province is the drawn-out site plan review process that adds thousands of dollars in unnecessary costs" and which over the years has become more "bogged down by bureaucratic red tape...."

"In 2013, OAA completed an analysis of these added costs and found a 100-unit condo could lose between \$400,000 and \$500,000 due to higher costs and lost equity for every month of site plan review." That is money that homeowners or renters have to pay that doesn't benefit anyone.

The association president said, "If those kinds of delays are applied to affordable housing projects, they're no longer economically viable."

The residential construction association reported that, "It takes an average of 10 years to take a home-building project from concept to occupancy," due in part to the 45 independent government bodies that play a role in the building process. I want to repeat that, Mr. Speaker: 45 separate government bodies, with no real oversight on their collective actions. Think of how much money could be saved simply by reviewing and cutting that red tape. Think of the impact it could have on reducing housing prices and encouraging the development of rental units. Yet, Bill 7 does nothing to address that problem.

Speaker, it isn't just red tape that's causing the challenges for new housing: Look at how the government

allowed development charges to increase. Municipalities have been struggling to make ends meet as the government cuts the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund grants and piles more and more costs on municipalities. Part of the government's solution is to allow increased development charges, resulting in more of the municipal infrastructure costs going into the cost of housing and rentals. As an August CIBC economic report said, "A surge in government-related development costs has compounded the affordability issue." According to a recent article by the Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association, "Over the past 25 years the tax bill on a new home has increased from 3% to about 25%."

At the same time as the government is piling more cost on homeowners, they're restricting supply, which is also forcing up the cost.

A study released this August by Ryerson University's Centre for Urban Research and Land Development found that the majority of people in the GTA, particularly in the 905, prefer ground-related homes which have access to a backyard. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you would prefer that too.

However, reports show that the government of Ontario policies would result in these homes only being an option for "the very wealthy." We've already seen some of the impacts of limited supply in places like Innisfil, where there are stories of people camping out for days to be in line when the first building lots are released. Economist and planner Russell Matthews said, "It's pretty straightforward, land use restrictions constrain supply. If demand stays high, that drives prices up."

Every decision has consequences. We support protecting agriculture and environmentally sensitive land, but the government needs to recognize that by doing so, supply is limited and the price of housing goes up. Add that to the government's other decisions—increasing development charges, ignoring red tape and driving up the cost of hydro—and the results are our current housing crisis.

As Richard Lyall, president of the Residential Construction Council of Central Ontario said, "The unfortunate reality is while government has remained adept at announcing new measures and ribbon cutting, it has yet failed to examine how their own existing system is driving up the cost of land and building. This is driving new housing further and further out of reach for an ever growing share of the population who are on average experiencing real declines in incomes."

While the government has talked a lot about affordable housing, there isn't much evidence that they have considered the impact of their decisions on affordable housing or taken much real action to address the problem. As I mentioned in my previous remarks on this bill, the government released a Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy in 2010. Since then, we've seen the waiting list for affordable housing increase by nearly another 20,000 families.

In 2010, the strategy stated, "The success of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy will be measured

using performance indicators.” The Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy committed to report annually on the social housing tenant satisfaction surveys, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s annual rental affordability indicator, and the Ontario Housing Measure, which reports the percentage of households with children under 18 who have incomes below 40% of the median household income and are paying more than 40% of their income for housing. Six years later, we have not seen a single report.

I wrote the minister before the new Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy was released and asked him to include these measures, or something equivalent. But there was still no performance indicator, just more nice words. So the only real way we have to measure the effectiveness of the six years of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy is the wait-list, the additional 20,000 families who have been added since this strategy was launched.

Now the government has released an updated version of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, which resulted in this bill. Once again, it contains nice words. But, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker, or should we just say Speaker?—I have concerns that it doesn’t truly address our housing crisis.

We recognize that solving the housing problem isn’t an easy problem to solve. A two-by-four costs the same, whether it’s going into a million-dollar home or an affordable rental unit. Government can’t just build more cheaply to create affordable housing.

Solving our housing crisis is complex. The solution involves ensuring that there is social housing available for those who need support services, as well as access to affordable housing for all Ontarians. It involves policies that will encourage the building of more rental housing. It involves co-operative housing, where people not only have an affordable, suitable place to live; they have a pride of belonging and ownership. It involves rent supplements, to give people choice on where they want to live and use their housing money as effectively as possible. It involves making sure that the dream of home ownership isn’t out of reach for families. It means ensuring that the rapidly increasing cost of living isn’t forcing people out of their homes or forcing them to choose between heating that home and eating. In fact, a significant portion of the solution has to be addressed in the cost of housing for all families.

If we simply shift the burden for affordable housing on to other homes and apartments, then we increase the number of people who need assistance to afford a safe place to live.

1640

To solve the problem, we need to consider the entire spectrum of housing—from homelessness to shelters to social housing to apartments and home ownership. When part of the system is broken, it impacts the whole spectrum. Simply shifting the cost from one type of housing to another won’t solve our problem.

I want to make it clear: We’re not against working with the private sector to find solutions to provide more

affordable housing. We are against legislation that is not well researched and thought out. We’re against legislation which seems to be more about good photo ops than good policy. And we are against driving up the cost of housing for all Ontarians.

Madam Speaker, there are many different models of inclusionary zoning. Some jurisdictions in the United States make it mandatory while others encourage it with incentives. The required set-asides and the market rents vary widely. As a result, the studies and evidence of the impact of inclusionary zoning also vary widely. It makes it difficult to determine what the financial impact of this bill will be.

Ryerson University’s Centre for Urban Research and Land Development said, in a 2015 report, “The effectiveness of any inclusionary zoning policy depends on a jurisdiction’s specific housing market structure and conditions, regulatory context and the design of the policy itself.”

Look at the example of Denver, which offers developers a density bonus, reduced parking requirements, cash incentives and expedited processing in exchange for building affordable housing. Therefore, the amount of cost that has to be absorbed by the new homeowners or renters would be significantly less than under Bill 7, which provides municipalities with some options but does not require any of those incentives.

In New York, the inclusionary zoning program offers an optional floor area bonus in exchange for the creation or preservation of affordable housing. As it was voluntary, developers would likely not participate if the density bonus wasn’t enough to cover the cost, so again, the cost to homeowners and renters would be less than what is proposed in Bill 7.

Madam Speaker, there are two ways that inclusionary zoning can increase the cost of housing. The first is direct, with the cost of the affordable housing units being added to the cost of the other units, resulting in the other homeowners or renters paying more. The other is that it can discourage building, which further limits supply, forcing the cost up.

Studies of inclusionary zoning in California from 1988 to 2005 and Boston from 1987 to 2004 both found that inclusionary zoning resulted in an increase in the cost of houses. The Boston study also found that there was up to a 10% decline in housing starts.

Following the government’s announcement on inclusionary zoning, Brian Johnston, chief operating officer for Mattamy Homes, wrote a letter to the editor:

“On your average high-rise of 300 units, my back-of-the-envelope calculation indicates that the buyers not eligible for the affordable units will pay about \$15,000 more per unit. The belief that developers will pay for affordable housing is a false one given financing requirements by banks and financial return criteria by investors.

“What planners and politicians fail to recognize is that this is just another tax on the first-time buyer/middle class. Surely this cannot be considered fair.

”It also prices some of these buyers out of the market, which will ultimately reduce the supply of badly needed

housing in the greater Toronto area. Equally objectionable is a new bevy of red tape that will envelop this proposal, slowing approvals and creating more deadening bureaucracy for both developers and government.

"The answer to a lack of affordable housing lies in less red tape and more targeted government support programs. It is simply not realistic to assume that inclusionary zoning is a free ride for all."

In a letter to the city of Toronto, BILD stated that, "Without proper as-of-right zoning in place, we will simply have another barrier to affordable market housing."

They went on to say, "Inclusionary zoning simply shifts the burden of responsibility onto those that are trying to enter into home ownership for the first time."

BILD held a round table on building affordable housing in the GTA with industry, government and non-government sector experts, during which concerns were raised that inclusionary zoning could be seen as the province downloading their responsibilities onto municipalities and the development industry. I think it's obvious to everyone here that if that's not so, it could at least appear so.

Concerns were also raised that inclusionary zoning would likely increase the cost of market housing units within a project unless there were financial incentives to offset the cost.

One of the other lessons from looking at the American example is that inclusionary zoning does not create huge numbers of units. As one stakeholder said to me this week, it's a tool; it's not the panacea for the affordable housing crisis.

Jennifer Keesmaat, chief planner for the city of Toronto, estimated that over the last five years, on average, it could have created 2,400 units a year. But since 2003, the waiting list for affordable housing has grown by an average of 2,600 families a year, 200 units more than the inclusionary zoning would have created. If inclusionary zoning increases the cost of housing for other families and decreases the number of housing units being built, that gap will grow even more.

Given that Ontario is already facing a housing crisis, the government can't afford to get this legislation wrong. They can't afford unintended consequences, but they seem to have once again charged ahead without doing the proper research and consultation.

We saw this in the ranked ballots, where they introduced the municipal elections legislation without being able to answer basic questions about how it would be implemented. In fact, the timing and the way that they handled it led 75% of municipal clerks surveyed to say that they did not think they would be prepared in time if their council decided to do ranked ballots in the next election.

Once again, the government can't answer basic questions about how this legislation would be implemented. They can't tell us if there would be exemptions for developments below a certain size.

The government hasn't figured out how inclusionary zoning would work in condominium buildings. Would

the tenants in the affordable housing units pay their share of the condo fees, or do the neighbours cover the cost of that service? Does it really make any sense to have someone who can't afford a car pay their share of the valet parking, or have someone who is struggling to put food on the table pay for the concierge to carry their groceries up to their unit or make restaurant reservations for them? We know that's not where they're going. But if they aren't paying for a share of the services, do they still get the same access to them as everyone else? Do they have the right to serve on the condo board? Is municipal social housing money used to pay the condo fees, even though that same amount might have provided housing for multiple families in another location? These are all questions that the government should have thought through before they introduced this legislation.

In fact, the summer after they first introduced the legislation as Bill 204, the Ministry of Housing conducted consultations that asked such basic questions as:

"Should there be provincial direction to further specify the target groups for inclusionary zoning, or should this be left to municipalities to determine?"

"Should there be provincial direction on how price and rent would be determined in an inclusionary bylaw when inclusionary zoning units are sold or leased? If so, what approach would you recommend?"

"Should minimum and/or maximum unit set-asides be specified province-wide or should this be left to each municipality to determine? If you think that a specified number or percentage of units should be applied province-wide, what would you recommend?"

Madam Speaker, this government put forward legislation that could have significantly impacted on the supply and cost of housing in Ontario, but they don't answer any of the basic questions of who would be eligible for the affordable units, what price they would pay, whether developments below a certain size would be exempt, and what percentage of units would need to be affordable. They can't tell developers whether this legislation would apply to planning applications that have already been submitted or whether those would be grandfathered. They haven't even decided whether the province will be making those decisions or whether it be the municipalities.

As staff in Sudbury said in a report to council, "Much of the detail of these proposed legislative changes are proposed by the province to be worked out in regulation that will be published after"—this is relating to the previous incarnation of this bill—"Bill 204 comes into effect. In many respects, it is too early to know the full effect of these proposed changes."

1650

Madam Speaker, I just want to point out here that all of these questions were asked between the introduction of the two bills. In the briefing I had this morning I was told that the bill that was introduced after all this consultation is word-for-word identical to the one that was introduced before the consultation, so either no one said anything or the government didn't listen to anything they were saying.

It's difficult for anyone to evaluate this legislation when there are so many unanswered questions. It's even more frustrating for the municipalities, developers and organizers that after the consultation this summer, the government chose to reintroduce the same flawed bill. Despite all the time and effort that the stakeholders put into preparing the submissions and attending meetings, the government hasn't changed a single word. It appears they weren't listening.

Well, I can assure all the groups that we are listening. I want to thank everyone who took time to meet with us or share copies of their submission and to assure them that we've heard their concerns. Both the people who support inclusionary zoning and the people who are against agree on one thing: There are always ways that we can make this better.

Madam Speaker, as the opposition critic, it's my job to point out when the government's proposed legislation is missing the mark. As I mentioned, there is very little that actually specifies how inclusionary zoning would work in this bill. In fact, two of the only things specified are that affordable housing cannot be built on an alternate site, and that the developer cannot provide cash in lieu of units. We'll get back to that, Madam Speaker, but that's a very important situation.

Both of these restrictions are well-intentioned, but stakeholders have already pointed out that they make it difficult to implement inclusionary zoning. Having a few affordable units in each building of a subdivision may not be the most cost-effective way of providing housing.

I already pointed out the example of a high condo fee that might be enough to house several families. Just a few blocks from here is the Charles Hasting co-op, which was created when a developer provided the land as part of their agreement to develop another site. Those are 91 units close to downtown and transit that wouldn't be there if this bill had been in place, because they could not move it from one site to the other.

Madam Speaker, as you know, I'm a big supporter of co-operatives, including housing co-ops. I think it is a model that works, because the tenant has the pride of ownership. Under the government's current legislation it's difficult to see how it would result in any new affordable co-op housing.

Other jurisdictions have found ways to provide flexibility while still maintaining mixed-income communities. New York and San Francisco require that affordable housing units be built within a distance of a project. Denver allows more flexibility, as long as the affordable units are built within half a mile of a commuter rail station.

These problems become more significant when you look at housing developments. In fact, over the last 10 years Toronto Community Housing has sold many of their stand-alone houses to reinvest the money into multi-unit buildings. As it said in a report to Toronto city council, "Single-family homes are not as cost-effective for TCHC to operate and manage as their larger multi-unit properties. Unless there is some geographical con-

centration or a co-location with a larger multi-unit property, operational staffing and support can be a challenge."

The government doesn't seem to have thought through how inclusionary zoning would work in a subdivision of million-dollar homes with large lots. The first question that comes to mind is, who is the lucky person who gets to purchase the million-dollar home at a fraction of the cost? Because they have to build it. But it may turn out that they're not really the lucky one. This family that needed affordable housing would then be stuck with paying the property taxes, maintenance, heating and other utilities on the large home—and just imagine the hydro costs.

The people who get the right to purchase a house at rates well below market may feel like they won a dream home in the Princess Margaret lottery, but unless there is thought on how they will manage the expenses of the home, they end up just like the lottery winners: forced to sell it because they can't afford to live there. Instead of having one family struggling to make ends meet with that large house, the million dollars could build four or five units that are cost-effective to maintain. They could have repaired 20 of Toronto's community housing units that are currently boarded up because they need so much maintenance, or it could have provided rent supplements that would have housed 130 families.

The way that this legislation is written, it applies to all developments, even those with two or three houses. That means that in a development of two houses, one would have to be affordable housing and the other house would have that entire cost added to their home. That isn't fair, nor is it practical.

If someone was proposing an infill development where there is only space for two or three units, it might not be economically feasible to have one of those units of affordable housing, but the money may be able to contribute to affordable housing in other areas. There are a number of options to solve this problem. The Ontario Professional Planners Institute recommended that the section of the bill which prohibits cash-in-lieu be removed and that it be allowed for small developments. It would follow the examples of American cities such as Denver, which exempts developments under 30 units from the mandatory inclusionary zoning but offers incentives to those developers to encourage them to include affordable units.

We could add flexibility by allowing cash-in-lieu where it isn't practical to include affordable housing. There are a number of examples where cash-in-lieu would be more effective and help more families: the high-end condo building, where the cost of paying for the share of the building's services would be enough to help multiple families find suitable housing; the subdivision, where the cost of maintaining the house makes it unaffordable no matter what the purchase price, or where the location far from transit and services make it impractical.

Boston, Chicago, Denver and San Francisco have all recognized the need to have flexibility by allowing cash-in-lieu.

In some cases, it is restricted or set at such a level that it provides a financial incentive to build the affordable housing units instead, but it still provides the flexibility for municipalities and developers when including affordable housing in a development doesn't make sense. As the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association said in their submission on Bill 204, "Given the diversity of development projects under way in Ontario, cash in lieu of units is an important option for municipalities."

Cornerstone Partnership studied the impact of the in-lieu fees collected in Seattle between 2002 and 2013 and found that the city was able to leverage these funds to create far more units than if they had simply been built on the original developments. This has to be part of the recognition that there are certain residential buildings where inclusionary zoning isn't appropriate. For instance, if a university builds a new residence, currently they would be required to provide a percentage of the units as affordable housing. Boston, Burlington and Chicago have provided specific exemptions for dormitories.

Currently, Bill 7 could apply to a seasonal development in which there is no winter access. Since there is no exemption for this type of development and no ability to build off-site or for municipalities to accept cash-in-lieu, we could create beautiful affordable housing that leaves people stranded all winter. We need to address affordability and the housing crisis, but we need to be smart about how we do it.

One of the recommendations from the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association was that government create policies that encourage and promote the development of affordable rental units. Bill 7 does exactly the opposite.

Last year, the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario provided a research paper to the government on removing barriers to new rental housing in Ontario. They recognized that the number of rental units being built in Ontario each year is well below the increase in demand, and we all know that low vacancy rates lead to less choice and higher rents.

They made a number of recommendations that the government ignored. They clearly told the government, "Unlike condominium construction, private rental housing is a long-term investment; FRPO reminds the government that uncertainty related to future government policy contributes to an unfriendly business environment and does not attract investment to Ontario."

Less than a year later, the government introduced this bill which would add significant new cost to rental projects which are already in the application stages. In fact, in the consultation that they launched after they introduced this bill, they asked, "Do you think that planning applications commenced prior to the enactment of the proposed legislative process should be grandfathered?" In their submission, the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, the Federal of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario and others clearly recommended that these applications commenced prior to the enactment should be exempt.

1700

Some people make the argument that inclusionary zoning leads to developers simply paying less for land. These developers didn't get that opportunity. They bought the land and invested money in the application process based on the current rules, and they should have the right to continue to operate under those rules.

Before putting in the application, development companies look at the profitability of the project. If the government is going to send the message that they can make changes to the rules partway through and make the project unprofitable, the developers aren't going to invest. Instead, they will choose to go to jurisdictions where the costs are predictable, they don't have the same red tape and their operating costs—like hydro—won't increase exponentially.

Developers aren't the only ones who are dealing with government unpredictability. The government claims that they are not going to force inclusionary zoning on municipalities, but—and it's a big "but"—they have included a section in the bill that allows them to do just that. If there is no hidden agenda and they are not planning to impose inclusionary zoning on municipalities that do not want it, why does Bill 7 say that municipalities prescribed by the province are required to have inclusionary zoning policies? They're not designated yet, but the government is going to have the power to designate them, which of course would then make it mandatory for those municipalities.

We believe that municipalities are a mature order of government. We believe that they should be respected and we believe that municipalities should have the right to decide that inclusionary zoning does not work in certain areas or in their municipality as a whole. That is what municipalities and AMO are asking for, and I believe we should respect that.

Municipalities are also pointing out that this bill once again includes downloading by stealth. It increases costs for municipalities in three ways: first, the new requirement to enumerate homeless people; second, the new responsibility for enforcing property maintenance standards under the Residential Tenancies Act; and third, operating the inclusionary zoning program itself.

This legislation requires housing service providers to conduct an enumeration of all homeless people in their area. In some cases, the service provider is the municipality. In other cases, the service provider is funded by multiple municipalities and provides services across the jurisdiction, which means that this new responsibility is an added cost for municipalities. It is impossible to know how much this will cost because the government will provide the details on enumeration, including how often and how it will be conducted, at a later date.

But what we do know is that when the federal government worked with designated municipalities across Canada to enumerate the homeless, it provided each municipality \$1 million. In comparison, Ontario has announced only \$2.5 million over three years for evidence and research. Does it mean, just like the first version of

the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, that there won't be any meaningful measurement so that government won't be held accountable? Or does it mean that municipalities will be on the hook for the rest of the cost?

Under Bill 7, municipalities will also be on the hook for inspecting and enforcing property maintenance standards in rental properties under the Residential Tenancies Act. Currently, if there is no municipal property standards bylaw, the minister is responsible for having rental units inspected if a complaint is received regarding maintenance standards. Under Bill 7, the responsibility for these inspections as well as follow-up work orders, if required, will be downloaded onto the municipalities. This is an additional cost on municipalities that are already stretched. By one estimate, 30% of municipalities do not currently have a municipal property standards bylaw. Many of these are smaller municipalities with limited resources. As the mayor of Greater Madawaska township said, "This is a prime example of further downloading onto the small rural municipalities who are struggling with the effects of ever-increasing police costs and fewer and fewer grants." I look forward to hearing from AMO at the committee about the cost of this download to municipalities.

We also heard from municipalities about their concern with the cost of inclusionary zoning. In fact, under Bill 7 the cost for any incentives such as waiving development charges to encourage inclusionary zoning would be paid by the municipality, not by the province. As a report from the township of Springwater council stated, "Therefore, funds that would normally be set aside for works such as road and infrastructure improvements would have to be found elsewhere within the municipal budget."

Municipal staff have also raised concerns about the reliability and the consistency of the data used to determine what is "affordable." That is in addition to the fact that units created under inclusionary zoning may be more spread out and less cost-efficient than other affordable housing units.

Madam Speaker, I understand the importance of trying to make affordable housing cost-efficient, so that limited dollars can help as many families as possible. Over the last few years, I've asked question after question about the waste and misuse of social housing money at the Housing Services Corp. I brought forward a private member's bill to try to stop this misuse and save housing providers money on their purchases of natural gas and insurance. When the government stalled my bill, I brought forward a motion encouraging them to move it forward. When they killed the bill by proroguing, I reintroduced it. And yet, despite all that, the government still refuses to implement these small changes that could add accountability and save housing providers money. Bill 7 amends the Housing Services Act, but it fails to make the changes required in the act for housing providers who purchase their natural gas and insurance through the Housing Services Corp.

The Housing Services Corp. was created by legislation to facilitate group-buying of natural gas and insurance for

housing providers, so that everyone could benefit from volume discounts. But over the years, the Housing Services Corp. has grown, and now overcharges housing providers to fund their own pet projects and world travel.

Toronto Community Housing calculated that purchasing through the Housing Services Corp. cost them \$6.3 million in a single year. To put that in perspective, it would have built more than 25 new affordable housing units, it would have repaired more than 125 of the units that are currently boarded up because they are uninhabitable or it would have provided rent supplements to house almost 820 families.

Toronto Community Housing is not the only one who is being overcharged by the Housing Services Corp. Hamilton Social Housing found that they could save over a million dollars in a single year if they weren't forced to purchase from the HSC. In Hastings county, purchasing through the HSC added \$40,000 to the cost of natural gas in a year. A report in Peel region found that purchasing directly could have saved them \$182,000. Thunder Bay estimated that they had paid an additional \$750,000. A report from Stratford found that they could have saved \$40,000 in a single year.

This is an interesting one, Madam Speaker: Waterloo region pays about \$10,000 each year just to be allowed to opt out of purchasing their insurance from the housing authority. They buy it from a private provider and still save money.

A report from Niagara region said, "While rates fluctuate, when comparing rates alone, on balance the HSC program has been more expensive than either Union Gas or Enbridge."

Oxford county has estimated that if they were allowed to opt out of the Housing Services Corp., they would save about \$100,000 a year. That is public money that was intended to provide housing in a local community that is being wasted because this government refuses to allow housing providers to simply purchase natural gas and insurance at the best price.

We will be putting forward an amendment to the bill to allow housing providers to opt out of the Housing Services Corp. and purchase natural gas and insurance at the best price.

If Housing Services Corp. can provide it at the best price, then housing providers will stay with them. AMO's Local Authority Services has shown that it is possible to pool these purchases and save money if your operations are cost-effective.

The government would have people believe that they have fixed the problem at the Housing Services Corp. Well, let me share what "fixed" looks like. It is almost October, but HSC has only posted expenses for the first three months of this year, and then only for five staff members. Among the expenses posted are two trips to England, including hundreds of dollars for preferred seat selection. There is a trip to Montreal and a trip to Santa Barbara, California, which have the purpose blacked out.

Housing Services Corp. listed the employees with the biggest expenses, but there are no details on what they

spent the tens of thousands of dollars on. They list the total expenses of the board members, but again, there are no receipts and no details. It wasn't that long ago that a board member was caught expensing a luxury seven-day vacation.

Last year, when the government said this problem was supposed to be cleaned up, social housing money still went to send multiple people to Manchester, England; Chicago, Illinois; Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; and Winnipeg—all of this for an organization whose sole purpose for existing is to provide services to Ontario housing providers. While 171,000 families are on the wait-list for social housing, staff at Housing Services Corp. are expensing \$4.50 for coffee and over \$200 to rent an SUV for a day to drive to meetings. They're still trying to build an empire at the expense of people who are waiting for housing today, and there is nothing in Bill 7 that would stop them from doing so.

1710

Madam Speaker, you may remember some of the stories I shared with this Legislature about subsidiaries that the HSC created. There was a solar panel company that received over \$1 million in public money intended to provide housing for families in need. Year after year, the HSC made large loans to the solar panel company and then wrote off the loans in the same year.

There was a subsidiary in Manchester, England, called HS 497 Ltd. It never operated and the only address was for a lawyer's office that had a history of setting up numbered companies. Unless we call the auditor, we will likely never know why Housing Services Corp. chose to put public housing money into that shell corporation, or what happened to the portion we didn't get back, but there is nothing in this bill that will allow the auditor to investigate that.

Madam Speaker, I want to point out another thing that isn't in this bill that would have contributed to increased affordability for housing in Ontario. There is nothing to deal with the so-called professional tenants who have figured out how to use the system to get months and months of free rent. These bad tenants discourage people from renting second units in their home—the very units that are often more affordable and that the government claims they are trying to promote—but there is nothing in this bill to address the loopholes that these tenants are using. In fact, even the government consulted on ways to help small landlords five months ago, and the minister's mandate letter says there is no action due on these problems until next year. How many more landlords will be taken advantage of by professional tenants in that time? How many potential landlords will look at that risk and decide not to invest in creating a secondary unit?

Madam Speaker, we know that solving the housing affordability problem is complex, but like the hydro problem, the first step is to stop digging. The government needs to stop implementing policies that drive up the cost of living for the people of Ontario. They need to considerate the total impact of their policy decisions on housing. They need to be aware of the reality of family

budgets. And they need to do proper research and planning on their legislation to ensure there aren't unintended consequences.

I want to ask the minister to take the time to do the financial models to see what the real impact of inclusionary zoning will be on housing prices in Ontario, to determine the cost to municipalities if they provide incentives, and the cost to homeowners or renters if they don't. I want to ask the minister to share that information with this Legislature or with the committee when the bill goes there. Housing is too important an issue to get this wrong.

Every day we hear from someone who is struggling with affordability in Ontario, whether it is someone who has been told they have to wait years for social housing or someone struggling to pay their hydro bill. Those people deserve a government that is looking at real solutions to make living more affordable for all Ontarians, a government that will end the waste and misuse of social housing money so we can provide housing and services for people who need them.

I hope that the minister will do the research and planning to ensure that we have a solution to the housing crisis that will make life better for those 171,000 families on a waiting list, and for all the Ontarians who are struggling every day to make ends meet.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for allowing me a few moments to put our position forward. I do want to end by saying that we will be supporting this, as we believe it is a start to looking at the whole picture of affordable housing and putting it all together. But unless there are significant amendments put forward in committee—we will be introducing some of them—we would not be able to support it, because without amendments it would not be taking us anywhere except more bureaucracy and not helping out people who need the housing. So we will be putting forward the amendments.

I was really pleased to hear the minister, in his remarks yesterday, saying that he was looking forward to the opposition bringing forward amendments of how we thought it would make the bill better. As you can tell from my presentation, we have a few areas where we believe we could make improvements. We will be putting them forward.

I hope that there's more to the words this time than there was to the last bill that went through municipal affairs, when we were told a similar thing. We went to committee and not a single amendment that we put forward was accepted by the government to improve the bill. They put a few of their own that they passed, but they refused to look at a single amendment from the official opposition. They actually spoke to some of them in a positive way, but when it came time to vote, they said no.

I can tell you, if we put amendments forward, it will be to improve the bill so we can vote for it. But unless we can get some changes in it, we wouldn't. But at this point we will be supporting the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: New Democrats believe in inclusionary zoning. We'll have a lot to say over the course of the debate on this. We also know that tomorrow there's a big-city mayors' conference on the crisis of affordable housing in Toronto. I believe the minister is going to attend. I hear he's going to make some kind of an announcement while he's there.

There's a lot of blame to go around in all three parties, at all levels. We just haven't done enough to support our municipal partners on this. We haven't been bold, we haven't been creative. The clock has finally caught up to us and now is the time to take real action. Now is the time we listen, really listen, to those who live with this reality every day of their lives. Now is the time we come together on the crisis of affordable housing in a non-partisan way and take the right steps toward a real solution. We're kidding ourselves if we think we can skate around the issue of affordable housing and just go for the headlines instead of a lasting solution. It will take money, really serious money, to get it done before we can say with any confidence that we're getting somewhere.

Our existing stock of social housing is crumbling. The money needed for repairs and renovations is just staggering. We have to make every effort. This bill is a starting point. New Democrats in the House are prepared to roll up our sleeves and get at it. We're prepared to take this bill around the province to meet those most in need of affordable housing on their own turf. They cannot afford to come to Toronto, Speaker. If ever there was a bill where a committee needs to hear from the stakeholders in every corner of the province, this is it. I hope the Wynne Liberals see it that way.

Minister, affordable housing is more, much more, than just a downtown Toronto issue. Show the people in this province that you are really finally ready to listen to them and to take action. Show them that you're making affordable housing the priority it should have been all along.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments. I recognize the Minister of Housing, also the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Mr. Chris Ballard: That uses up about 30 seconds of my two minutes, Speaker.

I wanted to just comment on something that the member from Oxford stated. Also, I'm delighted to respond to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. I hope that things will go well in Windsor. We know that a state of emergency has been declared there because of the flooding. We'll be closely monitoring what's happening there, but again, our best wishes to the families affected.

Speaker, the member from Oxford made a comment about the province downloading inspection and enforcement issues onto municipalities. I think it's unfortunate that he didn't ask that question of my staff when he had a very extensive briefing from them the other day, because the very simple answer to that is that most municipalities are already doing that type of inspection, either fully or

partially. They have their own property standard bylaws that include residential rental standards.

In fact, only 93 of the province's 414 lower- and single-tier municipalities, or about 22%, don't have their own property standard bylaws. The ministry handles in those areas just 20 to 50 maintenance inspection cases each year in Ontario. Many of those are performed for the ministry by companies who are active in those areas. Our suggestion and our belief is that those municipalities will be able to carry out those inspections using the same resources, and with the full backing and advice of our local offices. So it's a very simple answer, Madam Speaker, nothing to get our knickers in a knot over.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to offer a couple of comments in response to today's debate.

I think one of the reasons why this piece of proposed legislation is so important to people across the province, quite frankly, is that it has to do with housing. And a house is generally the most important investment that a person makes. Conversely, if they can't make it, it has huge implications for their stability as a family unit.

1720

I look at the fact that any legislation dealing with housing also has to look at how complex it is in different municipalities and different places in the province. In my own case, this is kind of the Wild West of home building. We have literally hundreds of homes under construction right now where the developers have closed their model homes and just have them open for a couple of hours because of the lineups that develop, where you have to a whole street of homes spoken for. By the end of the afternoon, they're all sold. People actually, I'm told, pay significant money—five grand—to get to the front of the line. It serves as one kind of slice of the whole issue around housing.

People look at this housing frenzy and look at mortgage rates and despair, quite frankly, of the potential problems for the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to say thank you to the member from Oxford for doing his hour lead today on affordable housing. The member from Windsor West—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Tecumseh.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The member from Windsor–Tecumseh made a very good point. He was talking about how the bill needs to be travelled, because the housing issue in this province has been neglected for a very long time. We see that because we know people are suffering when it comes to homelessness. We see that when people have long wait-lists for affordable housing, and if this is an opportunity to get it right, I think the member from Windsor–Tecumseh made a very good point. The bill needs to be travelled, and the people who have the need for affordable housing should be listened to and they should have access to communicate what the issues are so that we can accommodate that market. If

you have the bigger picture of how to build but you're not building for the people using it, something's going to be lost and we'll just end up in a situation where you have affordable housing that isn't meeting the needs of people who require that accommodation.

This bill talks about clearing some regulation so that the private market can start building affordable housing. The member from Oxford said that shifting the cost from one sector to the other isn't the full solution. It isn't the full solution. There's got to be a partnership with respect to funding. The government has to have a role between federal and provincial. We all have to get into it together. Putting it on the municipalities alone hasn't been working; we know that. That's why we're addressing this again.

I'm looking forward to hearing more about the bill and looking at how to help people who need affordable housing. It's everywhere in everyone's community.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Oxford to wrap up.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want thank the members from London-Fanshawe, York-Simcoe and Windsor-Tecumseh and the minister for the kind comments.

First, I want to say that I totally agree with the two members from the third party who had comments that a lot of consultation needs to be done. I think everyone agrees with the principle of inclusionary zoning, including myself, but how that's implemented—there's a great variance in views on that, depending on which side of the aisle one sits. I don't mean the aisle here; I mean the aisle between the developers, the owners, the renters and so forth. I want to say that I agree with them that as much consultation as we can do collectively is a good idea.

He spoke about the issue of inspections. He was referring to my presentation and I thought, "Well, this is great. The minister is listening." Then I realized that when he talked about what I'd said, he wasn't listening. I mentioned that it was about 30% of people that don't have a property standards bylaw today, which presently is being done by the ministry, and the quotes that I had that were from people in that percentage of people who have great concerns about the cost of doing that. Yes, the ministry will help—tell them that they can set up a department, put in a property standards bylaw—but somebody's going to have to pay. Those people, because they are the small people—some of them are not involved in housing at all, but yet they are involved in the planning process and planning approvals, so I think it's very important that they know.

Incidentally, the meeting with your ministry was this morning, and we thank you very much for that opportunity. We did ask him that very question. The part that concerned us about it is that they don't have an answer either about the value of how much it's going to cost the municipalities or the province, so I think that needs—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. Further debate? I recognize the member from Toronto-Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to stand down the lead of our critic on this speech so that I can make a presentation. The critic will be able to present at a later date.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Is there consensus? Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, members present in the chamber.

Like so many Liberal bills, Bill 7 has a number of appealing features, certainly on the surface, but unfortunately many of the details are going to be left to regulation. As you're well aware, Speaker, as someone who reads bills herself, who is in committee and who goes through these on a clause-by-clause basis, what "left to regulation" means is that much of this bill will be outside the control of the Legislature and outside the purview of those of us who get to vote on this bill. So whether Bill 7 turns out to be a good thing or a bad thing will very much depend on regulations, something that we in this chamber will never get a chance to vote on.

The NDP welcomes the bill's inclusionary zoning provisions, which we have long fought for, unfortunately with a fair amount of government resistance. My colleague the member from Parkdale-High Park has brought forward a bill for inclusionary zoning five times since 2009. It has passed second reading twice. One would hope that the government would have taken the subtle hint a few years ago and passed the bill. Better to have it here now than not have it at all, but that means a lot of wasted time.

Jennifer Keesmaat, the chief planner for the city of Toronto, estimates that if the inclusionary zoning proposed by the member from Parkdale-High Park had been put in place in 2009 when first proposed, we'd have 12,000 more units of affordable housing in Toronto than we have now. As you, Speaker, are well aware, there's something like 170,000 people on the waiting list for affordable housing here in Toronto alone. I'm sure there are many more across the province as a whole. As you're also well aware, Speaker—because my guess is that you get people coming into your constituency office who are in a very difficult position, who can't find housing that they can afford, who have jammed five and six people in a one- or two-bedroom unit, people whose lives are made very difficult by that lack of affordable housing, that could have been addressed in a substantial way. It wouldn't have eliminated the problem, but it would have made a difference in the lives of 10,000 or 12,000 families if this inclusionary zoning had gone ahead when the member from Parkdale-High Park had first brought it forward.

I have to say that there is a potentially worrisome aspect of this bill, in that it gives municipalities greater authority over the structure of the social housing agencies, including the power to privatize or dissolve the agency. What is not clear to us are the government's intentions. Having some flexibility is not necessarily a bad thing, but the privatization of social housing, affordable housing, across this province would be a very bad thing.

Municipalities find themselves in financial difficulties; they look around for solutions. We've already seen, under the administration of Mayor Ford in Toronto, the push to privatize and sell off units of Toronto Community Housing stock in order to pay other bills for Toronto Community Housing. I have no doubt that those repairs that were made had to be made. In fact, having gone through a variety of Toronto Community Housing buildings in my riding, I have no doubt that there's a huge backlog of repairs and maintenance that have to be done. But selling off units to pay for that maintenance can only undermine the long-run support for people who need affordable housing.

1730

I have concerns about this aspect of the bill. It's my hope that in committee there will be the potential to amend the bill to in fact protect those who are resident in affordable housing and protect those who will need that affordable housing in the future. That's a concern.

This bill also allows municipalities to give cheques to people in need of housing instead of actual housing. These so-called portable housing benefits may not be enough to actually allow tenants to access the housing they need. One has to ask, will this money simply flow to landlords? Will it allow those landlords to put through rent increases that they would have judged unworkable in a situation where tenants with low incomes wouldn't have been able to pony up?

Speaker, we had a debate about this. They were called "housing allowances" back in the 1980s. A lot of people did a lot of number crunching at the time. If in fact you don't expand the supply of housing at the same time you make these housing allowances available, or if you don't have in effect really strong rent control legislation—rent control legislation that prevents vacancy decontrol, rent control legislation that prevents landlords from putting frivolous or unnecessary repairs on people's rent bills—then what you do with this is you add to inflation, the cost in the rental sector, rather than helping people. You may in the short run be able to help some people who are in very difficult circumstances, but in the long run you'll drive up prices, making difficulties for those who receive the allowance and for everyone else. If this policy goes forward, it has to be accompanied by programs of development, of new housing. It has to be accompanied by very robust rent control measures.

Following that, rent protection is missing from this bill. For example, the bill doesn't end the current system of two-tiered tenant rights which exempts residences that were first occupied on or after November 1991 from rent increase guidelines. That practice is commonly referred to as "vacancy decontrol." This is not fair. All tenants should have the same rights regardless of how old their building is. But beyond the fact that it's not fair, it gives tremendous incentive to landlords to push tenants out. I'm dealing with a group of tenants in my riding right now on Bater Avenue in East York who have been subjected to ongoing pressure to move out of the building.

The reality is that real estate in the centre of Toronto is becoming more valuable. The price of houses goes up.

Those who can't get into the housing market think, "I can't put down a down payment, I can't get a mortgage, but I might be able to rent a rental unit in that area, and if I've got a fairly good job, I can pay a bit more than what people are paying now." Landlords understand that. Certainly with the tenants' group on Bater Avenue in my riding, they are facing a landlord who wants to upgrade their building quite dramatically, upgrade their rents quite dramatically, and move them out.

It's not just on Bater Avenue. Gamble, Cosburn: On those streets, as I've met with tenants, building by building, tenants who have been in their buildings for a longer period of time are finding less and less responsiveness when it comes to doing repairs. The landlords, not very subtly, are saying, "We don't want you here. We want you out because we may be charging \$1,100 a month for this unit now, but if you go out, we can put in some IKEA cupboards, maybe a new counter in the kitchen, and crank up the rent to \$1,600, \$1,700 a month," which in some buildings people are paying right now. So a failure to put in place the end to vacancy decontrol opens the door to landlords cranking up the rents and driving tenants out in the future. It's a recipe for destabilization of the rental market and destabilization of the lives of thousands of people, thousands of households.

The Liberal government promised to eliminate vacancy decontrol and restore real rent control prior to the 2003 election. It's been breaking this promise for over 13 years and, unfortunately, continues to do so with Bill 7. Because the opportunity is here to write a bill that will include an end to vacancy decontrol, give some stability, some comfort, some security to families who are renting. The government has turned its back on that opportunity.

The overall theme of this bill is an apparent belief that the market alone can provide affordable housing, as if by clearing away a few regulations, like dusting in the back room of your house, and liberalizing some bylaws, the private sector will magically start building lots of rental units. Well, Speaker, that was a fantasy in the 1970s, it was a fantasy in the 1980s, a fantasy in the 1990s, and it's a fantasy now.

We believe that there needs to be a removal of regulatory barriers to affordable housing. But the market alone will not solve the affordable housing crisis in Toronto, in Hamilton, in Ottawa, Windsor, Kapuskasing—it will not solve it in Ontario. It's pretty clear that the federal and provincial governments have to get involved again in building housing that people can afford and dealing with the destabilization of families and societies that come from, in just one example—that's Toronto—170,000 people being on the waiting list for affordable housing.

It's unfortunate that Ontarians are still feeling the effects of federal Liberal cuts to housing programs back in the 1990s. I think it was when Jean Chrétien came in—1993—that they cancelled the housing programs. It was the PCs who cancelled housing provincially in

Ontario, in 1995. Provincial funding for housing and homelessness prevention has been cut further in recent years, including a \$20-million cut to the housing ministry's budget this year. We've seen cuts in transfers to the city of Toronto for affordable housing over the last few years.

So whatever is said about concern for the homeless, concern for people who are under-housed, concern for people living in very precarious and uncertain conditions, federal Liberal, provincial Liberal and provincial Conservative governments have not put that money where their mouth is. They have decided not to provide the assistance that's necessary, and people suffer as a result.

Bill 7 will still allow municipalities to drag their feet in creating second-unit policies under their official plans. There's no reason to do that. If you're actually going to say that we're going to allow second units as a right, then you should proceed. That was the case under the NDP government in 1990-95. It doesn't solve the whole problem, but it helps a whole lot of people. I have no idea why this government is not, in fact, making sure that under this act municipalities must take action, have to take action, to allow those second units. There's no reason for the provincial government—for the provincial Liberals—not to deal with those unfair barriers and unfair costs that prevent the construction of new affordable units.

Bill 7 fails to clearly ban "people zoning" and other discriminatory bylaws that unfairly restrict affordable housing options—for instance, group homes—in apparent violation of the Charter of Rights, according to the Human Rights Commission.

Speaker, there are useful things in this bill. But clearly, there are many holes in the bill, many areas left unaddressed that have to be addressed if we actually want to come to grips with the housing crisis in Ontario.

What does the bill actually include? I'll touch on a few things. With regard to inclusionary zoning, the bill amends the Planning Act to enable municipalities to enact inclusionary zoning policies in their official plans by authorizing the inclusion and/or ongoing maintenance of affordable housing units within residential developments. That's a good thing, Speaker. That's a good thing—something we've been asking for for years, that the member from Parkdale-High Park has been fighting for for years. That needs to go forward.

1740

The minister may prescribe municipalities that are required to enact inclusionary zoning policies in their official plans. That's a useful step. It isn't just enough to leave it to chance, to leave it to political whim. People need housing and societies need stability, and affordable and stable housing is a key component of that.

Municipalities with inclusionary zoning policies may, and prescribed municipalities shall, pass inclusionary zoning bylaws. That's in the act. The inclusionary zoning bylaws shall include:

(1) the number of affordable housing units to be provided in a development or redevelopment;

(2) the period of time over which these units must be maintained as affordable housing;

(3) requirements and standards for these units;

(4) measures and incentives to support inclusionary zoning;

(5) the price at which affordable housing units may be sold or rented out; and

(6) any other matter prescribed by regulation.

So there are a number of boxes that are ticked there in terms of what has to be in place for inclusionary zoning. I imagine there are improvements that can be made, but as a framework, that's not a bad start.

There's no guideline, no requirement suggesting that the provision of affordable housing should be permanent. That's a problem, Speaker. I don't know about your riding, but I know that in the riding where you grew up, there's a lot of affordable housing that was built that's coming to the end of their agreements with Canada Mortgage and Housing and with the province of Ontario. The simple reality is that if those agreements aren't extended or rewritten in a way that allows the continuation of support for that affordable housing, people will lose their homes. Frankly, that's something that is not acceptable to our party, and that I don't think would be acceptable to the vast majority of people who sit in this chamber. They don't think it's a good idea that people should be put out on the street. They don't think that it's a good idea that a lot of people should find their living arrangements to be intolerable, impermanent and unpredictable.

The lack of guidelines requiring that affordable housing should be permanent has become a problem throughout this province. As a problem, it's inevitably putting affordable housing at risk.

The inclusionary zoning bylaw shall require landowners to enter into agreements registered against the title, allowing municipalities to enforce the bylaw with subsequent property owners. That's a useful thing. That speaks to the long-term nature of these housing arrangements. That should be there.

Municipalities are supposed to monitor and provide reports on affordable housing—again, a useful step. The reports shall include the prescribed information and shall be provided to prescribed persons. There appears to be no requirement that these reports be made public. That's another debate.

In this bill, there are no OMB appeals of inclusionary zoning bylaws, except by a minister—fair enough. Inclusionary zoning has to become just a part of everyday life. The potential for it to be challenged by those who have an interest in that inclusionary zoning not going ahead is profound. Leaving that in the hands of a minister is useful.

I have to say that in my riding a number of years ago, back when I was a city councillor, we built housing in my riding for seniors. I was opposed by local landlords in the area. Why? Because in providing that housing many of the damp basements that people were living in because they could afford nothing else were going to be emptied

out because people had an opportunity to move into a unit that they could afford, that was clean, that was safe and that was healthy. Landlords were upset because some of their attic units were going to be closed out because those people could now move into decent housing. The reality is that there are those who have a financial interest in there being a shortage and there being a situation where people are desperate and willing to take anything. So making sure that appeals of inclusionary zoning are very limited is probably a useful thing.

Condominium plans that propose affordable housing units must include details of shared facilities agreements—not a bad thing, Speaker. If you're going to have a mix of people living in a building, there's always the potential that someone will try to play games, try and make sure that those in the lower-cost units are kept out. That's not acceptable. We are all citizens. None of us are second-class; that has to be true in housing as well.

Bill 7 does not amend section 2 of the Planning Act to define a stronger provincial interest in the provision of affordable housing, nor does it offer a stronger definition of affordable housing as it exists under the provincial policy statement. It should, Speaker; it should. There's little cost in doing that. Again, it provides some stability, some promise of permanence, to those who need those units. It should be there.

Speaker, we're going to have a lot to address in amending this bill when it comes to committee, as I expect it will. There are some things that are useful here; much work that has to be done.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It was good to see the debate. The member from Toronto–Danforth I think added a lot to the narrative this afternoon: how Bill 7 will eventually get to committee, an opportunity to look at amendments.

I just want to talk a little today about affordable housing. I was at a wonderful event in my riding of Peterborough this morning, at 8:30. Through the Greenbelt Foundation, we gave \$58,000 to the Mount project in Peterborough, which is now becoming a model for affordable housing right across the province of Ontario.

When I was a little guy in Peterborough, I was taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph. They had rather a large property in Peterborough. About five years ago, the Sisters moved to new housing and left this rather large footprint. Now we're in the process of developing it. One quarter of it will be for affordable housing. In fact, just this weekend, people will start to move in. This morning, the \$58,000 that I was able to announce from the Greenbelt Foundation is going to create that food hub within that Mount project.

Just as the member for Toronto–Danforth was talking about, this is a comprehensive way to affordable housing. You bring the people into the units in there, and they will be taking the local produce from the great farmers who are in Peterborough county. I'll be at the plowing match for Peterborough county this Saturday. Madam Speaker, I want you to know that. I'll be very competitive in that competition.

So we're bringing in the local food. We'll put it through the new kitchen hub and we'll provide those new residents who are moving into affordable housing the opportunity to learn cooking skills and get that produce.

That's the kind of thing under Bill 7 that we're talking about: how we can have comprehensive affordable housing in the province of Ontario. I know that Minister Ballard is starting this process. We'll bring the government of Canada in and look at ways that we can really provide the housing that everybody needs.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 7 this afternoon and provide some comments to the member from Toronto–Danforth, who was speaking earlier as well. This is my first opportunity, obviously, to speak to the long-term affordable housing act that was introduced very, very recently. We just heard an hour leadoff from our critic from Oxford as well, who also indicated, like the member from Toronto–Danforth did, that there's still a lot that needs to happen with this bill in order for it to receive the support of our caucus over here.

One of the things that I've noticed when it comes to affordable housing in my riding of Prince Edward–Hastings is that there simply isn't enough of it. The waiting list is enormous for affordable housing, as it is in many other ridings across the province, but I think Hastings county actually has one of the longest waiting lists in Ontario—or at least they did. So we need to start building new affordable housing.

A brief story about an affordable housing unit that I visited back in early August up in North Hastings, in the community of Bancroft: There were a number of people there who were holding a protest because they live in an affordable housing unit with baseboard heating, Madam Speaker, if you can imagine that, where the electricity bill in an affordable housing unit was actually more than what they were paying for their monthly rent. Isn't that unbelievable, to think that that's the case? They already can't afford to live in their home, and then you tack on hydro rates, electricity rates, that are more than the cost of their subsidized housing. It's simply unacceptable, and it goes back to what the biggest crisis is in Ontario, and that's the mess that this government has made with our electricity sector. There has been a real abuse of power in this province, and I know that the good doctor across the way will get the double entendre there.

1750

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? I recognize the member for London West.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Wrong seat. I remind the member from London West, her seat.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Sorry. I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Toronto–Danforth on his remarks. He demonstrated a depth of knowledge of this issue, and he pointed out some of the gaps in this legislation.

We welcome this legislation. Our colleague the member for Parkdale–High Park has been pushing for inclusionary zoning in private member's bill after private member's bill. The member for Toronto–Danforth mentioned that had the inclusionary zoning legislation that the member from Parkdale–High Park introduced passed, Toronto's stock of affordable housing would have increased significantly. The same goes for my community.

I know that many of us met with our municipal counterparts at AMO in August. One of the number one issues on the agenda for the city of London councillors I talked to was the affordable housing crisis in my community, as well as the age and the deterioration of the existing housing stock. So getting this right is going to be critical to the people we represent.

One of our concerns about this bill as it is currently written is that so much of the detail around how this plan is going to roll out is left to regulation. That means that it's out of our hands. We don't have an opportunity to debate what is written into regulation, so it's a wing and a prayer when you have that kind of bill that you're asked to support without knowing what the real impact is going to be.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to make some final comments on what I've been hearing this afternoon. I thank the member from Toronto–Danforth for his impassioned comments, and the MPPs from Peterborough, Prince Edward–Hastings and London West.

What I've heard, and for well over two years and even longer before then as a councillor in my town and a resident in my town, is the importance of housing. The importance of linking housing to poverty I think speaks to why this government has created a new Ministry of Housing and the Poverty Reduction Strategy, because you can't have one without the other; we know that. If you don't have adequate housing, you are in poverty, and if you are in poverty, it is primarily because you do not have adequate housing.

Just a few facts for the record, Madam Speaker—I just wanted to demonstrate some of the commitment that this government has had to affordable housing. Since 2003, we have invested over \$4 billion in affordable housing across Ontario. That's nothing to be sneezed at, and \$1.2 billion of that flowed to Toronto for its use within the city of Toronto. In fact, my sense is that it's greater than \$1.2 billion, but we'll use the figure of \$1.2 billion to

Toronto since then. Another \$1.1 billion of cap-and-trade dollars are going to be put into affordable housing for retrofits and upgrades.

Clearly, this province gets the importance of affordable housing. This government gets how important it is to help keep people from poverty. Affordable housing is absolutely critical, and on that, we can all agree.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Toronto–Danforth to wrap up.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, the member from London West and the Minister of Housing for their comments.

There's no question that gaps in this legislation are highly problematic in terms of it being an effective piece of legislation. The Minister of Housing talked about the link between inadequate housing and poverty.

Speaker, without costing this government much in the way of money at all, we could end vacancy decontrol and prevent a whole bunch of people from being moved out because landlords want to make more money off their units.

Without spending a fortune, this government could tighten up rent control. I'm looking at some of my constituents at 50 and 70 Cambridge Avenue, who are facing rent increases of 15% over the next three years—5% a year for three years in a row. I have to tell you, Speaker, a number of those people on fixed incomes are there right now, just on the tipping point of being pushed out. If their rents go up 15%, they're out. They know that the waiting list is 170,000 people. They're never going to get into government-funded and supported affordable housing.

So this bill does do some useful things. The inclusionary zoning is certainly something that should have come sooner, but it's being moved on. But its omissions around making rent control far more substantial are highly problematic. The fact that there isn't a large investment in developing and operating new units, that's highly problematic. It's part of the puzzle, Speaker, but without a lot of other pieces, one can't see what's really there.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it's almost 6 o'clock, I will be adjourning the House until Monday, October 3 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1756.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Hon. / L'hon. Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Hon. / L'hon. Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of International Trade / Ministre du Commerce International
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism / Ministre délégué à l'Action contre le racisme
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable du Gouvernement numérique
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) / Ministre associée de l'Éducation (Petite enfance et Garde d'enfants)
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest-Glanbrook	
Vacant	Ottawa-Vanier	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Han Dong
Michael Harris, Sophie Kiwala
Arthur Potts, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Peter Z. Milczyn, Lou Rinaldi
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Yvan Baker, Mike Colle
Grant Crack, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Harinder Malhi
Jim McDonell, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
James J. Bradley, Raymond Sung Joon Cho
Wayne Gates, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Bob Delaney, Randy Hillier
Michael Mantha, Cristina Martins
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
James J. Bradley, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
John Fraser, Ernie Hardeman
Percy Hatfield, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Arthur Potts
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioic Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Ted McMeekin, Mario Sergio
Bill Walker, Soo Wong
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch